

POLISH - GERMAN RELATIONS UNDER
THE NON - AGGRESSION PACT.

by STANLEY GRYWALSKI, B.A., B.Ed.

September 22, 1958.

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POLISH-GERMAN RELATIONS UNDER THE NON-AGGRESSION PACT

A DISSERTATION

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by

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SYNOPSIS

After being resurrected by the Great Powers at the Paris Peace Conference, Poland attempted to play a rôle that would give her prestige and security in Europe. Poland, so long as Germany and Russia were weak, had little reason to be afraid; but her position - if not her existence - would certainly be threatened if either of these two powers grew in strength. Thus, weak as Germany and Russia were after World War I Poland, nevertheless, viewed both of them with suspicion and apprehension. Had not Russia attempted to destroy Poland in 1920 and was not Germany the source of restrictions on Poland at the mouth of the Vistula? Concern over Germany grew when she was admitted to the League of Nations. This entrance into the League was accompanied by increased friction between Germany and Poland and many volumes have been written regarding the attempted settlement of minor issues, particularly about the minorities problem. Then the successful political manoeuvring of Hitler resulted a National Socialist government of Germany with Hitler as Chancellor and, in effect, dictator. National Socialism, strongly anti-Communistic, had to find a way to thwart the spread of a doctrine that it professed to abhor, and one part of that way was the establishment of a rapprochement with Poland. Poland, strongly anti-Russian, and itself something of a devotee of the 'Leader' principle, accepted Hitler's gestures and in 1934 European government circles were shaken by the startling news that a Non-Aggression Pact had been concluded between Poland and Germany. The economic and political effects of the pact were in some degree beneficial, but the Polish Foreign Office and, in

particular, Beck placed too much faith in the agreement.

While the Non-Aggression Pact and the German rapprochement had sought to provide relaxation in tension between Germany and Poland, no such relaxation occurred in Danzig and the Corridor, a special focus of German-Polish tension. Since the peace conference had established the Polish Corridor and had raised the status of Danzig to that of a Free City, under League of Nations supervision, nothing but friction had resulted. The League of Nations guided in this matter by Anthony Eden, British Foreign Minister and League rapporteur for Danzig matters, acquiesced in the progressive Nazification of Danzig, while Colonel Beck, the Polish Foreign Minister, both at the League and in Warsaw, supported the same policy. And yet within the same policy he continued to agitate Polish interests in Danzig and the Corridor with as often as not apparent success. Herein is the paradox of the Non-Aggression Pact which this thesis attempts to spell out in some detail: a German delaying tactic, it could nevertheless seem, to Polish eyes, a resounding success.

Beck - and it is perhaps understandable - placed a great deal of faith in the German rapprochement and was perhaps its principal victim. Deceived by Hitler's reiterations of peaceful intentions towards Poland and rebuffed by France at the time of his awakening, that of the Rhineland crisis of 1936, Beck was lulled into a false sense of security until too late.

While Beck's conduct of Poland's foreign policy can be condemned, at least on the pragmatic ground that it ultimately failed, it is important

to note that when German demands threatened the very sovereignty of Poland, Beck refused to meet them and prepared to fight rather than surrender. But by now time was against him and Polish freedom perished.

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CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND, HISTORICAL AND OTHERWISE

Polska, the land of the Poles, forms a part of a great European plain which is narrow in the west, but which broadens towards the east. The plain may be likened to a fan that spreads from the Baltic to the Black Sea, and from the North Sea to the Urals. Together with these characteristics, the effect of the country's rivers must be taken into account in order to understand her history. The fact that it is a sort of gateway between the broad eastern plain and the narrow western one has placed Poland in a strategic situation on the military and commercial highroad between east and west; equally the main Polish rivers, flowing north to the Baltic, have made tremendous highways in this direction.

Though the natural highways have brought to the country advantages, that is, by making it a distributing centre and the route for transit trade, the disadvantages have been perhaps greater. Poland became the meeting-place of the Slavs, Germans, Scandinavians, and of the Western and Asiatic worlds. Whatever natural unity Poland possessed was because of the river valleys within boundaries. Specifically, the Dniester has taken the Poles towards the Ukraine, but Polish success here has been counteracted by various elements. The Vistula, together with its tributaries, has been the artery of the country's economic life. The exploitation by Poland of her water routes depended on her control of the port at the mouth of the river. However, from 1308 to 1454, and again by the

First Partition, she was deprived of access to the Baltic by a foreign power.

The dangers of her exposed central position were not mitigated by the possession of good natural frontiers. Though nature has provided the Carpathians in the south and the Baltic in the north, neither of these barriers have been effective as ethnographic or political limits. In the north the Polish population let itself be crowded away from the coast and old Poland was not successful in holding a sufficient frontage on the Baltic. On the west and in the east even the largest rivers such as the Netze, Oder, Warta, and Pripet could not have served as boundaries for they stimulated the creation of ties between the peoples on both sides. Another obstacle to the ethnical and political expansion of Poland was provided in the form of the Pripet marshes. Being a valley covered with approximately 30,000 square miles of forests and marshes and stretching from Pinsk eastwards, the Pripets held little attraction for the Poles. On the other hand, the Russians and the Ukrainians settled the region for they loved the forests and the difficult work involved in clearing them. The Poles settled north and south of the marshes and, consequently, added to the difficulty of maintaining a suitable and stable eastern frontier.

The emphasis on Poland's geographical location is not to attempt to explain her history and development in deterministic terms; rather, it is merely to put geographical considerations in the right perspective in relation to the large political aspects. Though Poland found it difficult to defend her frontiers, yet she existed as an independent state for over

eight hundred years. The loss of Polish independence within a period of twenty years has been shared by other European countries which had a strong natural boundary. More significant than the geographical position of Poland have been the political situations both within Poland and external to her.

This conclusion may seem to be invalidated by an examination of the political boundaries of the provinces, both Polish and external, which have been of most concern to the relations of Poland with her neighbours. With the exception perhaps of Galicia, in no case, whether one considers present-day Poland or the old kingdom at its greatest extent, are the provinces of Poland divided the one from the other by natural boundaries. As we have noted there are, except in the south, no mountains. The only other type of natural boundary is obviously riparian, and in the case of Poland the same conclusion seems to obtain about the provincial divisions as we have already made about the country as a whole: The provinces, like the country as a whole, are essentially river valleys and derivations of river valleys. Their frontiers, in every case except that of the provinces of the Pripet region (where the boundaries of the marsh region are also provincial boundaries), are purely artificial.

Now while this may seem to deny the conclusion stated above, in actual fact it does not. It is true that geography has been a basic determinant of Polish policy but there is such a long history behind this and Poland has been a European reality for so long a time, that secondary considerations deriving from the essential geographical determinant have

bulk larger as determinants than have the basic geographical considerations. An unfriendly critic might say that the neurosis has become so well integrated as to have become an essential part of the Polish (and German) national personality.

The organization of Polish society is of course a further basic determinant of Polish action, but of that more later. Before examining this question we will be well advised to look at one or two important provincial divisions.

Of these the most significant in Polish-German relations is Pomerania, which comprises roughly the estuaries of the Oder and Vistula rivers and the coastal region between, together with such hinterland as either the Pomeranians were originally able to settle or the dukes, later in the Middle Ages, to annex. The Pomeranians were a Slavic and a maritime people, as their name indicates (po morze - by the sea) who have been for the most part absorbed either by the Germans in the west or the Poles in the east. The only survival of this once wide-spread group are the Slovinci and the Kashubes of Pomorze or Polish Pomerania. Their assimilation to the Polish people was rendered more easy from the fact that both ethnically and linguistically the two belong to the same family.

The history of Pomerania is a confused one, a confusion worse confounded by the difficulties of the early Polish state. From at least the 12 century - with an interruption during the time of fraction--there has been some form of Polish domination at least over eastern Pomerania or Pomorze (a region often misnamed, following post-Partition usage, West

Prussia by many English historians, although it has nothing to do with Prussia, which province is and always has been east of the Vistula). The western region was, for a time, under a native duke but the extinction of this line in the early 17 century coincided with the rising ambitions both of Sweden and of Brandenburg. Eventually this rivalry was settled entirely in favour of Brandenburg (by now the Kingdom of Prussia) in the Prusso-Swedish treaty of 1720 which forms part of the Nystad settlement of 1719-21.

The whole Pomeranian question (of course the modern Corridor question is a part of it) is almost entirely strategic. One might almost say (of course with apologies in the proper direction) that the whole question was not worth the bones of a single Pomeranian grenadier. Through the most of historical times the land has been economically worthless, with a very sandy sea coast and a hinterland not much more productive. In modern times its productivity has been somewhat improved, but essentially it still remains a trading area, a point of contact between other and richer areas. The nature and economic position of Stettine and Danzig are sufficient evidence of this. The large importance of Pomerania in Polish-German relations is of course strategic, whether the word be considered in a military or an economic sense. It blocked both Brandenburg and Poland from the sea, and its conquest by both countries was, by consequence, an essential aim of their policy.

Another such point of tension between German and Pole is Silesia, historically perhaps less important but very active in the post-World

War I period. Silesia proper is that part of the valley of the Oder south of Brandenburg and lying in the south between the Sudeten Mountains and the Tarnowitz plateau. Like Pomerania, Silesia was originally colonized by a number of Slavic people akin to the Poles, one of whom settled near the mountain Zlenz, ^{and} gave its name to the province. The province's history begins with its attachment to Poland about the year 1000 A.D. Soon after this, however, the dukes of Silesia adopted a policy of inviting in German settlers with the result that the western part of the duchy in particular became largely German in language, law and custom. In this way the seeds of much later conflict were sown. The Germanic areas in particular and the province generally found their already existing prosperity much multiplied in the 19 century after the Industrial Revolution when a substantial industry, both secondary and primary, was based on German and Polish skills and Silesian iron. With the recreation of the Polish State after Versailles the problem of Upper Silesia with a mixed Polish-German population presented a knotty problem to the peacemakers and an interesting plebiscite was held, which has been much written about. That the result of the plebiscite was not 100% satisfactory to either contestant will be well evidenced in the main body of this narrative.

The case of Prussia is different from that of either Pomerania or Silesia. Where there is a long history of Polish connections with the two latter, it is only in late medieval and early modern times that Poland expanded into a clash with Prussia, which the Polish kings had allowed

to go by default to the order of the Teutonic Knights. The story is so well known as not to need recapitulating here. Suffice it to remark that the Prussian case is similar to the Silesian and that a lively German immigration, in this case sponsored by a Germanic ruling house, swamped its original Slavic population, in this case one of the Baltic group like the Lithuanian and Latvian who are closely akin to the Poles. Prussia is perhaps more attractive economically than Pomerania, but that is about all that can be said for it. Germanic thoroughness, however, and the driving ambition of the Teutonic order, created a substantial Baltic empire from a Prussian base in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Like all the provinces of this region, Prussia has no meaningful natural frontiers, except obviously the Baltic coast. In the north the Prussian frontier crosses the Memel River while in the west the Vistula is the frontier only to its mouth and the Danzig area which was always attached to Pomerania. To the east and south the frontier is purely artificial, even though it has remained constant through centuries. After the Treaty of Thorn (1466) an area was ceded outright to Poland which is usually called West Prussia, while the familiar East Prussia remained to the Elector of Brandenburg as a fief of the Polish king. A certain confusion has resulted from the fact that after the incorporation of Pomorze into Prussia it was joined with west Prussia and the new enlarged province was renamed West Prussia, a tendency the Prussians continued after the third Partition when the whole of Prussian Poland was renamed Prussia (West, and enlarged East - containing Warsaw - and a new South).

The whole is most confusing and has undoubtedly served to render less clear the undoubted Polish claims to Pomorze and the Danzig area.

In the south, Galicia is quite as amorphous (perhaps demi-morphous might be a better word) as any of the Polish provinces. The north part of Galicia is a plain while the south contains an extension of the Carpathian mountains. As might be expected it is yet another meeting ground of races, the population being largely half and half Polish and Ukrainian. Overrun by the Mongols in the thirteenth century it was recovered for Europe by Poland in the mid-fourteenth century and for four centuries remained Polish, disappearing into Russia in the First Partition. In modern times mining has permitted the addition of a mildly flourishing industry to the agriculture basic to the region. But it should be noted that Cracow is Galician and that the province has always been an important centre of Polish culture.

The definition of these few provinces has served to reinforce the basic premise which was stated at the beginning, that influence of geography on Polish political history has been rather negative than positive. Except for the Pripet region and its attraction to Ukrainians and concomitant repulsion to Poles, no Polish province has natural frontiers in the accepted sense of the term. And yet these frontiers (unlike those of Poland itself) have remained curiously constant through the centuries. It is to history that one must look for other explanations and perhaps then geography may come in by the back door as it were. The lack of form of the Polish terrain, the openness of its nature, at one

and the same time inviting both invasion and expansion, have served to exaggerate in Polish history the importance of individual leaders at all levels from the local to the national and at the same time to render the loyalty of their following a precise function of their political and military success. This exaggerated feudalism, without the normal depths and traditions of the feudal attachments, has been at one and the same time the strength and the fantastic weakness of the Polish State, whether pre-Partition or post-Versailles, as we shall see in the following chapters.

The first item of recorded Polish history concerns a war waged in the year 963 by the Polish ruler Mieszko against the German adventurer, Weckman. Thus, recorded Polish history began with a war against the Germans. Subsequent centuries were to see many such conflicts.

The years of the Piast dynasty were for Poland years of expansion, both territorial, political and cultural. However, during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries vicissitudes beset the kingdom.

The royal authority established under the Piasts all but disappeared and the country became the prey to all sorts of feudal ambitions on the part of the nobility. This period of anarchy is known to Polish historians as the time of fractionalization. It was further complicated by the extreme westward influence of thirteenth century Mongol expansion. In 1241 Batu Khan invaded and ravaged southern Poland as far as Silesia. This invasion, while dramatic, is perhaps not as significant in Polish history as other and newer conflicts. The best estimate of the total number of Mongols under Batu in Poland limits this to 30,000, but their

tactics were so brilliant and so unfamiliar that they have seemed much more numerous to the Poles. The Polish resistance was gallant (and, to a degree, united), while the Mongols were uninterested in the pursuit of further conquest beyond the Muslim world, so that, after a short contest, whose principal result for Poland was the death of the chief ruler, Henry the Pious, the Mongols withdrew. The most significant result of these invasions was to bring the country into contact with the Golden Horde, and to commence a period of wars and raids which were continuous from the thirteenth century "to the extinction of the Crimean khanate in the eighteenth century".¹

However, despite political decentralization and foreign intervention in many parts of the country, memories of kingship and national unity were not lost by the populace. Unfortunately for Poland, though, this was also the period of what was perhaps the most successful aspect of the Teutonic Drang nach Osten. In 1225, Duke Conrad of Masovia invited the Teutonic Knights to settle in Prussia. Thus was founded the German colony which has been the most constant thorn in the side of Poland. In 1308, the Teutonic Knights, not being content to remain in Prussia, seized eastern Pomerania, and thus cut Poland from the Baltic. From that year the struggle for Danzig and the control of the Vistula has continued.

1. William Fiddian Reddaway et al., The Cambridge History of Poland (Cambridge, 1950), I, 92-93. "The toll of youth exacted by the barbarians is a sociological factor in Polish history." Ibid. But the Polish fate was mild compared to that of Russia or Hungary.

During the fourteenth century the Polish nation managed to regain unity and strength particularly under Casimir the Great (1333 - 70). A new orientation in foreign policy resulted in Pomerania being sacrificed to the Knights and Silesia to Bohemia. But this was balanced by the acquisition of Galicia and by the establishment of more suitable relations both with Lithuania and the Ukraine.

In the face of a dual German and Russian menace, the Union of Lithuania and Poland was brought about in 1386. This union and the acceptance of Christianity by the Lithuanians destroyed most of the mission of the Order of Teutonic Knights, which was a military-monastic Order on the model of the Templars and Hospitallers, formed to evangelize the Prussians and other Baltic groups. The monastic and evangelical aspect of the Order soon became grossly subordinate to the military and the Order soon created for itself a Baltic empire for its base in Prussia. Eventually, this empire was ended by the Polish-Lithuanian state and the Order confined to its original Prussia base. The Polish-Lithuanian union resulted in the creation of a realm which was for a long time the strongest power in Eastern Europe and the second or third largest state on the Continent. What is more to the point in this context, it was the nemesis of the Teutonic Order.

Because Eastern Pomerania was both a Terra irridenta and an economic necessity to Poland and because the activity of the Teutonic Order in their dominion was threatening to Poland, war ensued. On July 15, 1410 the Teutonic Order was defeated by a combined Polish-Lithuanian army at

Žieloe Pole (Tannenberg). Decisive as was this battle, the Knights were by no means defeated completely. The struggle went on for a generation more. But the issue was never really in doubt. The Knights were in decline and Poland was in the ascendant. Finally the long struggle came to an end with the Treaty of Thorn in 1466. By this treaty Danzig and East Pomerania were ceded outright to Poland while East Prussia was retained by the Knights but as a fief of the Polish crown. The German menace was conquered and three centuries of comparative tranquillity resulted on this frontier.

The sixteenth century is Poland's "Golden Age", in which Polish culture flourished as never before. The University of Cracow became a renowned centre of humanism and under the Sigismunds a brilliant Polish literature came into being. The Thirty Years' War did not touch the prosperity of the country, but soon afterwards trouble began again in the shape of a Cossack revolt led by Chmielnicki and groups of Turks and Tartars. This was unsuccessful but very soon far larger dangers presented themselves by the aggressive designs and actions of the Russians and the Swedes as well as by the calculated friendship of the Great Elector.

The country then experienced a recovery and a brief new era of prestige under John Sobieski (1674-1696). After his death, decadence and stagnation set in, progressively increasing until the death of the country's independence in the Partition.

One of the significant factors contributing to this stagnation was the political system which allowed a lethargy and impotence to develop.

A single class known as the szlachta had won control over the Crown. Had the szlachta organized the government, the results would not have been disastrous. What happened was that "authority passed not to the Diet but to the local assemblies (Dietines), and, in the last analysis, to each country gentleman".² The szlachta were those

who had either no land at all or only enough to make a bare living. Poverty-stricken, ragged, and dirty, living like peasants or worse, but still filled with all the pride of their caste, and eager to give vent to it on all occasions, these people exerted the derision of every foreigner, and were, indeed, one of the most unique spectacles to be seen in Poland.³

The possession of the Liberum veto by this group resulted in no less than twelve Diets being dissolved between the years 1695 and 1762. This governmental chaos and a succession of incompetent rulers left the country ill-prepared for the foreign dangers that threatened it. Indeed, by the eighteenth century, Poland had become such a power vacuum as to be the object of the avaricious ambitions of all her neighbours. Within the country Russian influence was perhaps the strongest of all the foreign ones, supported as it was by such leading families as the Czartoryskis, the Leszczyńskis and the Poniatowskis. The maintenance of the archaic Polish constitution was thus in the highest degree in Russia's interest. There was indeed a grave danger that the country might become a Russian

2. Robert Howard Lord, The Second Partition of Poland (Cambridge, 1915), 16.

3. Ibid, 29.

satellite. Frederick the Great, on the other hand, was tantalized by ambitions of an east-west Baltic expansion, while after the great wars of the mid-eighteenth century, Austria was avidly desirous of obtaining an equivalent for the lost Silesia. The Russo-Turkish war of 1769-70 provided Frederick the Great with his opportunity. Fearful of its extension into a European war he revived the century or more-old idea of Polish partition as a sop to Russian and Austrian ambitions and as a preventive of European war. After considerable negotiations the tactic was successful and the First Partition was effected in 1772.

Prussia received all of Pomorze except Danzig, Thorn and their municipal territories. Russia received the Palatinates of Polock, Witebsk, Misislaw as far as the Dvina, and part of Podolia. Austria received a part of Silesia, Podolia, and Little Poland as far as the Vistula.

The partition aroused many of the Polish magnates to perceive that reforms were essential. A revival of the arts, sciences, and literature was brought about. Some progress was made towards the establishment of constitutional government. The insane Liberum veto was abolished. But it was too late. The sands of Polish independence had run out.

In 1792 Russia invaded Poland under the pretext of supporting the opposition to the new constitution. Prussia also joined with her neighbour to share in the spoils. Prussian and Russian Poland was suitably enlarged as a result. Prussia secured the mouth of the Vistula with the city of Danzig. This left Poland isolated from the sea. Russia gained the Palatinates of Kiev, Minsk, Braclaw, and a greater part of Volhynia --

a total area of 90,000 square miles and a population of 3,000,000.

A last desperate attempt by the Poles to form a government failed and in 1795 the Third Partition was effected and Poland ceased to exist as an independent state. Austria received the territory lying between the Bug and Pilicia, including Cracow. Warsaw was taken by the Prussians whose share comprising all of Great Poland and Mazovia reached the Niemen River opposite Kaunas and Grodno. All territory east of a line drawn from the city of Brest-Litovsk and to the new Austrian border went to Russia.

Before the Third Partition was effected it had been resisted by a last gallant Polish rally under Tadeusz Kościuszko, eminent in Polish and in American history. Kościuszko had served with distinction in the revolutionary army of General Washington. Returned to Europe and the ferment of the French Revolution, he then served with even greater distinction as the leader of this last dying Polish resistance. One may be permitted to wonder what bitter thoughts, after the failure of the 1795 forlorn hope, went through Kościuszko's mind as he contrasted the apparently limitless vista of hope which lay before the infant American republic with the heavy weight of failure and frustration which rested on the Polish nation.

This was certainly Poland's darkest hour. And yet even in this gloom there was a ray of hope. France was the ancient ally of Poland and now revolutionary France was a beckoning light to all nationalities, a beacon which even the conquests of Napoleon had not succeeded in dimming. When,

after the Tilsit agreement, the Grand Duchy of Warsaw was created, both Polish nationalism and the Russophilism of the Czartoryskis and the Poniatowskis seemed to be satisfied. Certainly the Grand Duchy served as a notable source of men and money for the Tilsit partners.

Fortunately for Poland this arrangement disappeared after Napoleon fell afoul of Alexander. But a new partition was in store with the Vienna Congress in 1815. In fact the Polish question was perhaps the thorniest one which faced the Vienna negotiators. Before the Battle of the Nations Alexander had assured Austria and Prussia that the Grand Duchy would be destroyed in their interests. But after the battle the Russian Emperor decided to retain the whole of Poland and negotiated at Vienna "with her sword in her hand", to use the striking phrase of Grant and Temperley.⁴ Metternich and Castlereagh, fearful of Russia, found themselves forced to agree with the greater part of Alexander's demands. Prussia received in this partition the province of Posen, retaining also Pomorze and Danzig, while Austria retained Galicia. The rest of Poland went to Russia, a very considerable enlargement over the Russian Poland of the 1795 Third Partition. Both Castlereagh and Metternich were disturbed over this gross upset of the Balance of Power.

When the "Congress Kingdom of Poland" was created, the Russian czar, Alexander, promised to endow her with a liberal constitution in addition

4. A. J. Grant and Harold Temperley, Europe in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries (1789-1950) (London, 1952), 136-137.

to her local autonomy. The Poles viewed the Russian gift with suspicion and rightly so, for the viceroy, (the Grand Duke Constantine - he of the idiotic "Constantine and Constituzia" cry of the abortive 1825 revolution in Russia), was a man characterized, at least by Polish historians, by stupidity, brutality, and a complete lack of sympathy with the constitution.

The death of the liberal Alexander in 1825 ended all hopes of a Greater Poland. Nicholas I, his successor, was an autocrat and a reactionary. Incensed by the attitude of Poland, Nicholas resolved to suppress the liberties that remained. The Diet was summoned in 1826, and very shortly was dissolved. The outbreak of the French Revolution in July, 1830, excited the Poles and in that November a revolt was precipitated in Warsaw. Losing nerve, the Grand Duke withdrew the Russian troops from the capital and from the country. An insurrectionary government under the leadership of Czartoryski came into being. Lacking firmness of direction and wasting time in futile negotiations, the Poles permitted the Russians to mass their armies on the frontier. Crossing the frontier in February, the Russians won victory after victory until the guns of Warsaw were silenced in September. The constitutional kingdom was destroyed and instead the Organic Statute came into being. This Statute came into effect in February, 1832. It stipulated that the Polish Kingdom was an integral part of the Russian Empire. Government was to be by a Council of State composed of Russians and Poles selected by Marshal Paskievich. Oppression and gross tyranny were imposed upon the populace by the unpopular Marshal.

Though Poland was helpless and disarmed, she nevertheless still

preserved her ideal of national unity. The annexation of Cracow (formed as a free republic at Vienna in 1815) by Austria in 1846 proved actually an aid to the Poles. Here Polish national spirit continued to develop and eventually spread throughout the nation.

Another abortive attempt in 1848 to throw off the Russian yoke failed, and for fifteen years the Poles continued to endure harsh and brutal measures of repression.

It is probable that Alexander II's intentions with regard to Poland were genuine. He not only desired to emancipate the serfs but to establish the peasantry as a class loyal to Russia. Unfortunately, to these liberal measures was added a military levy directed at the middle and upper classes. This provoked the outbreak of another Polish revolt in 1863 which lasted over a year. Polish forces at first advanced into Russian territory, but disputes, jealousies, changes of commanders, and poor organization soon enabled the Russians to gain the upper hand. The failure was followed by an intensity of punishment never suffered by the Poles before.

Though the Poles abandoned all political activity, they were harshly treated by both the Russians and the Prussians. The Prussian policy was the more severe, for it sought more thoroughly the destruction of Polish nationalism. The Prussian attack came in the spheres of administration, religion, and land tenure. Bismarck's kulturkampf attacked ecclesiastical authority of the Roman Catholic Church and Catholicism was an integral part of Polish nationality. The closure of churches, the suppression of

religious orders, the prohibition of religious education in schools aroused bitter resentment in the Polish Catholics. By 1880 the struggle against the Church was abandoned, while the Expropriation Act (under the terms of which the Prussian Government could, at its own discretion, expropriate Polish lands) and the Colonization Act (which established a hundred million mark fund for the assistance of German settlers in the buying up of Polish lands) had both failed signally in their desired effect. In fact the Poles had resisted so well - and so constitutionally - that at the end of eighteen years of the operation of these Acts, the Poles had more than recovered their position and had actually acquired more land than they had lost.

In Russian Poland, the period following the suppression of the Polish revolt 1863-4 was marked by a transformation. Not only was progress made in the fields of agriculture and industry, but in political attitudes as well. A conciliatory attitude was taken towards the Russians by Dmowski, and eventually under his leadership, the National Democratic Party won all the Polish seats in the First Duma. At the same time it should be stressed that this process of conciliation was an attribute of the maturing of the Polish nationalist movement and was not matched by any particular Russian concessions. The process of Russification went on apace, and sometimes with particular severity.

In contrast to Russian and Prussian Poland, Galicia or Austrian Poland was the most backward of the Polish lands. The peasantry were poor, ignorant, and exploited not only by the Polish nobility but by the

Austrian Government. The revolts of 1846 and 1848 had ended in failure. The annexation of the Republic of Cracow in 1846 destroyed the last vestige of free Poland.

After 1863 a change was experienced. Excluded from the embryonic German state, Austria determined upon reform. The principal Austrian idea of reform was an admission of the Magyars into partnership in government, but it was also found necessary to conciliate at least some of the Slavs. As a part of this conciliation the Galician Poles were granted a share of autonomy in return for the support they rendered the Government in the Reichsrat. The administration of Galicia was placed in the hands of the Poles and a large number entered the services of the Austrian Government. Such training of personnel was to prove invaluable to the resurrected Polish state of 1919. Not only was Galicia to serve as the centre of Polish administration, she was also a refuge from oppression for artists and intellectuals.

The outbreak of World War I found the Poles divided into two camps. One camp fought on the side of the Russians, the other on the side of Austria and Germany. Pilsudski and his Legions fought in the Austrian army while other Legions, organized in France, fought on the western front against the Central Powers.

Not only sharp differences, but diametrically opposed views separated the different sections of the Polish people in respect of their war aims. Those who lived in Russian Poland advocated a Poland federated with Russia under a liberal constitution. Similarly, those who lived in Austria

advocated a Poland united with Austria under a liberal constitution.

Shortly after the outbreak of the war, both Austria and Russia wooed the Poles. Germany, however, failed to offer any plan of her own.

The Austrian proposal as advocated by Franz Józef promised a Polish kingdom incorporated within the Hapsburg monarchy on parity with Austria and Hungary. This proposal was vetoed by Count Tisza, the Hungarian Premier, and objected to by Germany.

The Russian offer as proclaimed by Grand Duke Nicholas on August 16, 1914, promised the unification of Poland under the sceptre of the Russian czar, with guarantees of freedom of speech, religion, and self-government. The Russian Poles responded favourably to the Russian promise, and the Russian war effort was not hindered to any appreciable degree in Poland.

On August 5, 1915, German armies captured Warsaw and Russian Poland was overrun by the Central Powers. The Germans despoiled the country and despite reassurances from Russia that she would free the country and grant it autonomy, the Poles remained uncertain. On November 5, 1916, the Emperors William II and Franz Józef declared that Polish territories wrested from Russia would become an independent state under an hereditary and constitutional monarchy.

The Russians refused to accept the German and Austrian offer, and no enthusiasm was exhibited by the Poles towards the plan. As for Great Britain and her western Allies, they were uninterested in the Polish question. Poland was a Russian sphere of influence and the only solution of the Polish question which appealed to the British was local autonomy under Russian rule and Allied guarantees.

This attitude on the part of the Allies remained until the fall of the Russian dynasty in March, 1917. On March 30, the Russian Provisional Government was prepared to grant the Poles the right of self-determination with certain reservations. But Russian influence vanished with the downfall of the Kerensky offensive in July, 1917.

There now remained only the Central Powers. In May, 1917, Polish members of the Austrian Reichsrat voiced the demand for the creation of an independent Poland with an outlet to the sea. Moreover, an international discussion of the Polish problem was demanded. At the same time, the German request for an oath of allegiance and the recruitment of Pilsudski's legions into the German army led to the resignation of Pilsudski from the Reichsrat and the organization of his forces against the Germans. For such subversive activity, he was incarcerated in the Fortress of Magdeburg on July 22, 1917, and 5,000 of his followers were interned. In August, the Diet being discredited by the populace, resigned and in September, it was replaced by a regency which consisted of the Archbishop of Warsaw, Dr. Kakowski, Prince Lubormirski, and Joseph Ostrowski. In November, 1917, the first prime minister was appointed

and the ministry took office on December 7.

While these events were taking place in Austro-German Poland, Dmowski and Paderewski (who had given up his career as a virtuoso pianist to serve the needs of Poland) were disseminating propaganda for the Polish cause in England and America. Under the influence of Paderewski, Wilson on January 22, 1918, alluded to the principle of a "free, independent, and united Poland." At the same time, a Polish military force was organized in Russia under General Dowbór-Muśnicki, and, in June, General Haller was placed in charge of Polish troops in France. By the early part of October the Allied Governments had recognized the Polish National Committee in Paris under the direction of Dmowski and Paderewski. Its recognition was to prove invaluable for the future of Poland at the Paris Peace Conference.

In the meanwhile, the November Revolution had eliminated the Russian armies from the war. A few months later the German-dictated peace of Brest-Litovsk of March, 1918, not only dismembered Russian Poland but placed large territories purely Russian under the sovereignty of Austria or Germany. The province of Chelm was allotted to the Ukraine, while a secret clause stipulated that East Galicia and Bukovina were to be formed into a separate Crownland. As soon as the clauses of the treaty became revealed, the Polish public became infuriated. Not only did the Polish Cabinet resign but Polish members in the Reichsrat sided with the Opposition. Remnants of Pilsudski's army mutinied. Some were interned while others made their way to France to continue their struggles on the

Western front. Elections for the Council-in-State were held in Poland in April but little attention was paid to this for most Poles favoured the National Committee in Paris.

As the military position of Germany and Austria deteriorated through the months of October and November, 1918, the Poles utilized every opportunity. On October 6, 1918, a manifesto was issued by the Polish Regency Council demanding the formulation of representative national government and the establishment of a "free and united Poland". On October 15 the Polish members of the Reichsrat declared that they were a part of the "free and united Poland". On the same day the Galician Poles were invited to Warsaw to discuss the formation of a Polish Government with the Council of Regency. A cabinet was constituted on October 22 and on November 3 it declared the existence of the Polish Republic. On November 10, Pilsudski, liberated from his German prison, arrived in Warsaw. On November 14 the Council of Regency resigned and Daszyński became the first premier of a free and partly united Poland. When Daszyński was unable to form a cabinet, Moraczewski, a Socialist, was made premier, Pilsudski assuming the title and office of "temporary chief of state".

The problems which faced Pilsudski and his government after November 14, 1918, were Herculean. The territories both of Congress Poland and Galicia had been devastated by the War. Many of the fields were in waste and the livestock had either been driven off or slaughtered. Thousands were homeless and wandering, and typhus became more prevalent. Many of

the factories were destroyed or their machinery looted for Germany or Austria. Public and private finances were in a chaotic state and while all three currencies, schilling, rouble and mark, circulated their value was low and uncertain. Radical propaganda was rife, and political parties were as numerous as they were futile.

Moraczewski's government was of the Left, composed of Galician socialists and representatives of the peasants. Because it was not supported by the propertied classes its attempts to float a loan failed. Under Moraczewski's direction a national election based on proportional representation was called and on January 26, 1919, elections to the Chamber of Deputies or Sejm were held. In the meantime the country had been tentatively united, and Paderewski and Dmowski had returned from exile. The result of the elections was the return of a moderate rightist government under Paderewski as Premier with an overwhelming majority. Of the 500 members elected, 400 supported the Government; a Socialist party of 80 and a small Jewish element formed the Opposition. No elections were held in East Galicia because of a conflict with the Ukrainians, nor were representatives from Poznan sent to the Chamber until the conclusion of the Versailles Treaty. On February 10, the Sejm met. A vote of confidence was passed in Paderewski's cabinet and Pilsudski was confirmed as the head of the State, although his position and duties were not clearly defined. The Sejm soon degenerated into a struggle between the Left and the Right. The Right, convinced that Pilsudski would become the next President, demanded a limitation on the power of the executive. The

Left advocated a better balance between the legislature and the executive. Also a bitter debate ensued between both sides as to whether Poland should have a Senate, and whether the Chief of State was to be permitted to serve as Commander-in-Chief. Thus, all the major issues tended to centre around the personality of Marshal Pilsudski.

This first Sejm was actually a Constitutional Convention and when the new constitution was completed it was brought in and adopted in March, 1921. Resembling closely that of the Third French Republic, it established universal suffrage for both sexes, permitted a President elected for seven years, and a Parliament of two Houses. A majority of the Sejm could overrule the Senate; and, no dismissal of the Sejm could occur until three-fifths of the Senate concurred.

The adoption by Poland of such a constitution proved a trap for without the necessary experience and discipline in democratic institutions, the ultra-democratic constitution permitted the Poles to outdo their French model in kaleidoscopic changes of government. The Paderewski government was defeated in 1919, its successor was equally short-lived and ministry followed ministry with bewildering rapidity. The way was thus prepared for an ultimate dictatorship, and who but Pilsudski?

Meanwhile at Versailles an attempt was being made to define the frontiers of Poland. This was a weary and long-winded task and the element of secrecy maintained by the "Big Five" irritated the Poles. Difficulties in reaching any settlement were enhanced by the lifelong dispute between Dmowski and Pilsudski. Dmowski maintained that the most dangerous enemy

of Poland was Germany; therefore, the new State's western frontiers should be strengthened. Towards this end he desired the incorporation of the industrial region of Silesia within Poland. At the same time Poland's access to the sea by way of Danzig necessitated the possession by Poland of territory lying on the banks of the Vistula, including a part or all of East Prussia.

As to the eastern frontiers, Dmowski felt that the territories inhabited by non-Polish elements should be free to develop their own national culture and should not be included within the sovereignty of Poland. Therefore, he thought the Ukrainians should be granted their independence in East Galicia, the White Russians theirs on the Soviet border, and the Lithuanians a separate existence in the Vilna area. The securing of Poland in the east left open the door for an ultimate understanding with Russia.

Pilsudski, on the other hand, held totally different concepts. Being strongly anti-Russian, he was unwilling to sacrifice the Ukrainians, Lithuanians, or Ruthenians to his historical enemy. When the frontiers of Poland had been pushed as far east as possible, a series of small states were to be created. These were to be attracted into the orbit of Poland by her superior economic, cultural, and administrative efficiency.

Circumstances decreed that Dmowski's concepts rather than those of Pilsudski should prevail at the Peace Conference. The western borders were drawn, though not strictly, on ethnological lines. Under the Treaty of Versailles, the province of Poznan was restored to Poland. Poland

was given the Corridor, although strips of territory on its fringes were left to Prussia. East Prussia was left in the hands of the Germans although a plebiscite was ordered in Masuria for the benefit of the two million Poles living there. The Conference chose a similar method to determine the fate of Upper Silesia. The territory of Danzig, under the protection of the League of Nations, became a Free City, autonomous in its administration, with its government in the hands of a Senate, and its customs and diplomatic relations with foreign powers entrusted to Poland. Details regarding the future administration of communications, harbour, waterways, and of the customs union were incorporated in the treaties signed in 1920, 1921, and 1923. Article 87 of the Versailles Treaty assigned the task of delimiting Poland's eastern frontier to a Commission to be approved by the Allied and Associated Powers. Though the Treaty was not popular in Poland, it was ratified by the Sejm on July 30 and 31. The next three years saw Poland preoccupied with questions which arose, either directly or indirectly, from the Treaty.

A dispute over the industrial district of Cieszyn (Teschen in German) resulted in sporadic border clashes between Czechoslovaks and Poles. On January 30, 1920, a plebiscite commission arrived in the district but in July the Supreme Council established a demarcation line through the district of Zips and Orava which cut the town of Cieszyn in two. Plebiscites held in East and West Prussia on July 11, 1920, indicated adherence to Germany and so the disputed districts there were allotted to Germany.

Serious difficulties were encountered in Upper Silesia. Article 88

of the Versailles Treaty stipulated that the inhabitants, except for the purely German elements, were to decide by a plebiscite whether they were to form a part of Poland or Germany. Prior to the vote, Allied troops occupied the territory. At the polls, 707,605 votes were cast for Germany and 479,359 for Poland.⁵ Support for alliance with Germany came predominantly from the industrial districts and towns. Reacting to a rumour that Germany was to be assigned two districts, the Polish General Korfanty, with an armed force, occupied south-eastern Upper Silesia. He was assisted by the French militia. British troops sent to restore order occupied the principal towns while the French and the Poles held the country districts.

The matter was brought to the attention of the League Council by the Conference of Ambassadors. A committee of the Council on October 20, 1921, awarded the south-eastern districts, as well as most of the valuable economic resources to Poland. A convention, signed on May 15, 1922, guaranteed the continuity of the economic life of the country and provided protection of the minorities for a period of fifteen years. The settlement was conceivably a victory for Polish nationalism but still, while Poland was strengthened, Germany was weakened and German-Polish friction increased.

The eastern frontier could not be drawn at the Paris Peace Conference for the Russians were not present. Finally, after vigorous discussions, the Supreme Council adopted the so-called "Curzon Line".

5. Georges Kaeckenbeeck, The International Experiment of Upper Silesia (London, 1942), 6.

The decision was made only after the fullest investigation had been made. On this subject Temperley remarked: "It must be strongly emphasized that only after the fullest discussion of the principles involved in each case did the Conference arrive at its final decisions."⁶

The Curzon frontier, which allotted to the Poles territories ethnographically Polish, proved insufficient. Upon this Temperley said:

In the east their demands were varying and obscure. They gave up the strictly ethnographic principle, and demanded not only Eastern Galicia but at least some portion of White Russia and the Ukraine, on the grounds of defence or economics or history or culture.⁷

From the day of her independence, Poland had cast covetous eyes on East Galicia. Her desire to possess this territory, with its area of 50,000 square kilometres and its 5,000,000 population, is easily understandable in view of the natural resources it possessed: coal, salt, potassium and oil. Furthermore the wealthiest landlords in East Galicia were Polish.

Petlura, the Ukrainian nationalist leader, regarded East Galicia as part of the Ukraine; consequently, a struggle for its possession began in the spring of 1919. On January 10, 1919, Polish troops occupied Lvov (Lemberg) and in February, an armistice was effected by an Allied Mission. The River Bug was to serve as the armistice line. However, fighting soon

⁶. Harold William Vazeille Temperley, A History of the Peace Conference at Paris (London, 1924) VI, 236.

⁷. Ibid.

broke out again, and further efforts at mediation by the Allied Governments proved momentarily unsuccessful.

Paderewski who had returned to Warsaw from the Peace Conference carried instructions to effect a settlement with the Ukrainians. The Diet refused to acknowledge those and despite his pledge at Paris, Paderewski yielded to its clamour.

By the end of May, Polish forces had occupied the whole of East Galicia. Fighting continued and by the end of July, the Poles had control of the territory up to the River Zbrucz. This gave the Poles the natural frontier they desired.

Yet the Peace Conference was reluctant to allot East Galicia to Poland and the Russian "White" Generals refused to acknowledge the fait accompli. Finally on November 20, Poland was assigned a Protectorate over East Galicia for twenty-five years. After this period of time its fate was to be determined by the League. Even this provisional solution, granting 95% of the substance of Polish desires, failed to meet the approval of the intransigent Polish Government.

Simultaneously with the East Galician campaign Poland became involved in a struggle with the Soviet Union. By the summer of 1919, Polish armies had established a front well advanced into Russian territory, and by the end of 1919, the frontier stood 250 miles east of the "Curzon Line".

Having achieved this success, Pilsudski bided his time. While assuming that the Soviet Government would be victorious in the Russian Civil war, the Marshal thought that its forces would be too exhausted to

repel a Polish army, equipped by the Allies, seeking to establish the frontiers of 1772.

The Soviet Government, beset by civil disturbances, and anxious to embark upon economic reconstruction, offered the Polish Government important concessions. Three times during the winter of 1919 invitations were extended to the Polish Government to enter into peace negotiations. Though negotiations were entered into, the Poles, intransigent as always, were determined on war.

After the differences with Petlura had been settled, the Poles opened a strong offensive against the Soviet border forces. Kiev fell to the Poles on May 8, but the occupation was shortlived. The defeat of Denikin and Kolchak enabled the Soviet forces under Budyenny and Tukhachevsky to launch a counter-offensive. Soon, Polish troops were in head-long retreat. By July, the Polish forces were in a serious plight. The Bolsheviks had captured Pinsk and Grodno, and a Russian column had penetrated into the former Austrian province of Galicia. Panic set in at Warsaw and a delegation headed by Prime Minister Grabski met with the Supreme Council at Spa on July 11, 1920, to solicit Allied help.

One can not pretend to know what settlement was envisaged by the Supreme Council, but the British Foreign Secretary, Lord Curzon, proposed that the Polish troops withdraw to the Curzon Line, and that representatives of Soviet Russia, Lithuania, Poland, Latvia and Finland assemble in London to negotiate a peace. This offer was rejected by Chicherin, by People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, but agreed to the Supreme Command

of the Soviet Army which commenced direct negotiations with the Polish Military Command. Negotiations were delayed because Russia believed that with the course of time her military position would become greatly strengthened.

Meanwhile, events in Poland moved more rapidly. A separate request to France for military help was acceded to and French munitions, together with a staff of military advisers headed by General Weygand, arrived in the capital on July 25, 1920.

On the Russo-Polish front, the Russian advance continued. By August 14, the invading army had reached a point within a dozen miles of the Polish capital. The Government issued an appeal to the people, which was responded to nobly. The next day a counter-offensive launched by Weygand and Pilsudski saved the city from defeat and rolled the Russians rapidly eastward. By the end of August, Russian forces were back in Lithuania, and losses encountered in the retreat exceeded 100,000. These losses were the result of the insubordination of Budyenny who attempted an invasion of Galicia rather than an orderly withdrawal.

Peace negotiations, which had been proceeding in the interval, were transferred from Minsk to Riga. Here both sides stated their terms. Soviet spokesmen offered a frontier more favourable to Poland than the Curzon line, but the Polish representative demanded a line further to the east.

Finally on October 12, a preliminary peace treaty was signed. The final Peace Treaty was signed on March 18, 1921, and ratified by the Seym

on April 17.

Under the Treaty, the eastern boundary was to be extended beyond the Curzon Line and to include millions of Ukrainians and Byelorussians. Poland was to be compensated with 30,000,000 roubles as her share of the Czarist Government's gold reserve, and was to receive railway stock and locomotives equivalent to the value of twenty-five million roubles. Art collections, historical documents and libraries, which had been confiscated by the Russians after the First Partition, as well as industrial installations removed by the retreating Russians in the World War were to be restored.

The cancellation of the Curzon Line failed to meet with the approval of the Allies. They had initially intended that an autonomous state for the benefit of the Ruthenians of Galicia should be created. Moreover, some degree of alarm was exhibited over the extension of Polish rule into parts of Lithuania which were not predominantly Polish. Paderewski supported the Allied viewpoint, and in so doing, lost the support of the people. Criticism and abuse were hurled against him, and at the end of 1920 he resigned, this time retiring from politics and resuming his concert career. Thus was lost to Polish politics a man who had devoted so much of his time and effort to the establishment of the Polish republic.

While Poland was embroiled with the Bolsheviks, she was also experiencing difficulties with Lithuania over the question of Vilna. Polish forces had occupied the town and district in April, 1919, but these had been assigned to Lithuania by the Allies. During the Bolshevik

advance of 1920, Lithuania had negotiated for a separate peace with Russia, and on July 12, Lithuania's claim to the Vilna district was recognized. On the retreat of the Bolsheviks, Lithuanian troops reoccupied Vilna and entered the province of Suwalki which had been granted to Poland. Poland appealed to the League, while in October a White Russian Legion of the Polish army under General Zeligowski took over the disputed area by a coup de main. The General was disowned by the Polish Government but no steps were taken by them to restore the territory. Soon an international force arrived to occupy the disputed area pending settlement of the issue.

Both sides agreed that Suwalki should be Polish; the disposal of the remaining territory under dispute was referred to the Belgian Foreign Minister, M. Paul Hymans, for arbitration. His decision was handed down in May, 1921, and provided for an autonomous state with a Polish-Lithuanian administration under the protection of both countries. The plan was rejected by both sides. Meanwhile elections for the local Diet resulted in an assembly calling for union with Poland. At this point the League withdrew its army and called for the two contestants to arrive at a settlement. In April, 1922, the Sejm passed an Act of Reunion incorporating Vilna as part of Poland. In 1923, the Allies, despite vigorous Lithuanian protests, agreed to the fait accompli.

Lithuania was not able to challenge the annexation by a force of arms, and her protests were cynically received by other countries, for on another frontier she had behaved precisely in Polish fashion. Her seizure of Memel was a direct violation of the Paris Peace Settlement.

Nevertheless, Lithuanian feelings remained bitter against Poland and the Polish-Lithuanian border remained closed to both political and economic relations.

Though the Polish Republic occupied an area of 150,015 square miles on the map of Europe, poverty and backwardness prevented her from making great progress. The new liberty brought factious bickering that tended to discredit Poland's democratic experiment. When the new Constitution came into effect in 1922, Pilsudski, annoyed by the Sejm's struggle over the right of nominating cabinets, announced that he would not stand for the presidency. The Sejm secured the election of Gabriel Narutowicz, a close friend and supporter of Pilsudski. On December 16, a fanatic of the Right assassinated the President. His successor was Stanislas Wojciechowski, another supporter of the Marshal. Sikorski became premier.

Under Skulski, Grabski, Witos, Ponikowski and others, Parliament degenerated into a "bear-garden". The weaknesses of the governments increased the economic and reconstruction problems. By the early part of May, 1926, the zloty had depreciated to less than half of its par value. Attempts were made towards financial reconstruction by Grabski in 1924, with measures based upon the recommendations of Hilton Young, a British financial adviser invited by the Polish Government. However it proved to be impossible to maintain a balanced budget, and the printing of additional notes contributed to the decline of the zloty.

However, despite the short-lived coalition ministries, war-devastated areas were rebuilt and many other positive economic results

were achieved during the period 1918-26. The eight-hour day was adopted in 1918. Trade unions were legalized in the following year and in 1920, unemployment bureaus were set up. Agrarian acts passed in 1919 and in 1925 provided for the division of large estates. In 1926 a half million acres were transferred to the peasants and this process was continued for the next ten years. (In parenthesis, however, it must be remarked that this healthy move, substantial as it was, did not materially affect either the prosperity or the political influence of the landed classes). In 1920 Poland became a member of the League and in 1921, the Franco-Polish Alliance was signed. During the period of 1924-5 treaties of friendship and arbitration were signed with all Baltic countries except Lithuania. Early in 1925 a seat on the Council of the League was assigned to Poland.

Nevertheless, the weaknesses of the constitutional system resulted in demands for a stronger government. The disappearance of Poland in the eighteenth century was primarily the result of the weakness of the executive, and warnings of a similar catastrophe in the twentieth century were not without foundation. Since relations with Russia and Germany continued to be unsatisfactory, a fourth partition of the country by these two powers was not impossible. No one comprehended this more strongly than Pilsudski and when, in 1926, Witos formed a third cabinet containing a Minister of War who was strongly opposed to the Marshal's dictates, Witos was accused of corruption. Supported by forces from Vilna under General Rydz-Smigly, Pilsudski marched into Warsaw. After three days' resistance Wojciechowski and Witos were forced to resign. Rataj, Marshal of the

Seym, became the Acting President. Pending the appointment of a new president, a cabinet under Bartel administered the affairs of the country. The two Chambers, assembled on May 17, voted Pilsudski to be President. The Marshal declined the office but secured the election of Mościcki, a scientist of high repute but little political experience. Pilsudski took over the post of War Minister and within a few months became premier.

Following the election of Mościcki, Pilsudski secured the passage of the Constitutional Law of August 2, 1926, which strengthened the powers of the president at the expense of parliament. Not only was the president empowered to dissolve the Senate and the Diet, but if the Seym should fail to approve the budget within a specified time, the president was empowered to pass it on his own authority. This act of legislation was followed by the Presidential Decree of August 7 which removed "anti-Pilsudski" officers from the armed forces and provided for the Inspector-General to be Commander-in-Chief in time of war.

Pilsudski's conservative attitude in financial and economic matters caused the Left to desert him in October, 1927. Not able to retain the support of the peasants or National Democrats, he decreed the dissolution of the Seym and the formation of a "non-party government bloc" headed by Colonel Slawek.

The election held in the early part of 1928 failed to give the government bloc the majority that it required. In fact, it polled fewer than one-quarter of the 11,400,000 votes cast, thus indicating that parliamentary and democratic ideas were still strong in the country.⁸ In June,

⁸. Sidney Henry Zebel, A History of Europe Since 1870 (Philadelphia, 1948), 866.

the refusal of the Seym to accept Pilsudski as a candidate for Marshal of the Seym caused him to resign and leave the country open to another coup d'etat. Fortunately, this one failed to materialize. Presumably the War Ministry was a sufficiently strategic position for Pilsudski at this time.

The next two years witnessed a bitter struggle between the Government and Parliament. The Marshal of the Seym, Daszyński, headed an opposition which sought to end the semi-authoritarian régime. Four cabinets which had been installed by Pilsudski were overthrown; the press censorship laws were repealed; and a draft of a constitution strengthening the executive was defeated. At the Cracow Conference of June, 1930, a bitter attack was levied at the Marshal and the resignation of Mościcki was demanded.

These demands caused Pilsudski to dissolve the Seym. New elections were ordered and the chief members of the Opposition, including Witos, were imprisoned in the Fortress of Brest-Litvosk. High-handed measures by the Government failed to secure for the "non-party bloc" the majority which was necessary to provide for a new constitution. This opposition was overcome within a nominally democratic frame by an efficient political innovation of Pilsudski. A sufficient number of opposition members were arrested so that the Government's control in the Senate and Diet could be maintained, and the proposed constitution adopted. The new constitution came into effect in April, 1935, after this ingenious method had been used to secure its passage in the Diet.

Under the constitution, the president was chosen for a seven year

term by an electoral college composed of ad hoc appointees of the president as well as a further seventy-five electors, of whom one-third was chosen by the Senate, and two-thirds chosen by the Sejm. If the retiring president and electoral college could not agree on a successor, a referendum was to be held. Moreover, the president was granted a suspensive veto over legislation, the power to appoint a ministry, and to legislate by decree when the Sejm was not in session. The president also served as head of the army and in times of internal disturbances and war had unlimited powers. In fact, the Polish president had more powers than were vested in the executive head of the United States. As Carl Sandburg said in a different context: "On the seventh day he rested."

Whether Pilsudski had any intention of becoming president remains uncertain for in May, 1935, he died. His place, as War Minister and principal power in the country, was taken by General Smigly-Rydz. Colonel Slavek, who acted as the head of the government bloc in the Sejm, became prime minister, while control of foreign policy passed into the hands of Colonel Beck.

Soon the Colonels' group, as it was called, began to apply coercion to the opposing groups. By the enactment of laws in July, 1935, the size of the Sejm was reduced to one-half, and political parties were denied the right to nominate candidates. Instead the nominations were granted to electoral colleges, which were controlled by the government. Moreover, the Senate was removed from the control of the populace and placed in the hands of distinguished citizens and the president.

The purpose of the new electoral laws was to abolish parties and to give Poland a non-political parliament.

The election in the fall of 1935 was boycotted by the opposition members with the result that only 46.51 per cent of the voters participated in the election.⁹ President Mościcki, dismayed by the strength of the opposition, and undoubtedly prompted by Smigly-Rydz, forced Slavek to resign. The new premier was not able to retain power for the severe economic crisis, the opposition from the military group, and a lack of confidence on the part of the peasantry caused his ministry to collapse.

Once again power was seized by the Colonels. Smigly-Rydz forced Mościcki to appoint five military men to key positions in the government and to issue a proclamation honoring him as the "second citizen of Poland". In November, 1937, he was created a marshal in the Army.

In the early months of 1937, the "Camp of National Unity" was created which adopted Catholicism, nationalism and anti-Semitism as its programme. Other measures, many imitative of fascism, were adopted but proved most unpopular. Attempts to establish a fascist state failed. Demands by the peasants and workers for a democratic constitution and the return of the exiled leader, Witos, resulted in an outbreak of strikes during the month of August. Police intervention caused the death or injury of scores of strikers. Attempts to assassinate Colonel Koc, the head of the Camp of National Unity, proved unsuccessful.

⁹. Malbone W. Graham, "Polish Politics, 1918-1939". Cited in B. E. Schmitt, Poland (Los Angeles, 1945), 142.

Because of widespread discontent, Koc was forced to resign his position in January, 1938. With his resignation, attempts to establish a totalitarian regime came to an end. Though the group of Colonels remained in power, threats from Germany caused efforts to be made towards domestic conciliation. Measures to appease the peasants were blocked by the Sejm.

Mościcki, to break the deadlock, dissolved the Sejm and ordered elections in November, 1938. Since the Sejm refused to permit any changes in the electoral laws, opposition parties boycotted the election. Thus, the government candidates secured a large majority. No further changes towards national unity or democratic control were displayed by the governing clique which remained in power until the outbreak of World War II.

CHAPTER II

THE 1934 NON-AGGRESSION PACT AND A GERMAN-ORIENTED POLISH FOREIGN POLICY

The most cursory examination of Polish-German relations reveals a profound hatred as their fundamental characteristic. The reason is simple. The Germans' Drang nach Osten has for a millennium pressed on the Polish State as its first victim.

This enmity has been reversed on only two occasions.¹

The first reversal was the conclusion of a Prussian-Polish Alliance towards the end of the eighteenth century, an alliance brought to an end by the Partitions of Poland.

The second reversal was the German-Polish Non-Aggression Pact with Poland in 1934. In 1939, when Hitler had realised his immediate objectives of Austria and Czechoslovakia and had concluded a pact with Russia he attacked Poland, and the whole country was divided between Germany and Russia by the Treaty of September 28, 1939.² The Poles might well say: "Timēmus Germanōs et pacta ferentēs".

The fundamental axiom of restored Poland was that Germany and Russia were her most dangerous enemies. It was realized that the prostration of Germany and Russia was only temporary and that Poland's geographical

1. W. W. Goole and M. F. Potter, Thus Spake Germany (London, 1941), 233.

2. James W. Gantenbein, Documentary Background of World War II, 1931-1941 (New York, 1948), 1029-1031.

position rendered her at the mercy of both neighbours. However, the temporary weakness of both countries permitted Poland after 1918 to pursue an anti-German and anti-Soviet foreign policy. The Treaty of Rapallo³ constituted no threat to her foreign policy or prestige. Poland's respectability among European nations was certified by her membership in the League of Nations and her 1921 alliance with France.⁴ Ranking as one of the major powers of Europe, Poland was, however, tormented by a two-fold anxiety; a fear for her military security and extreme jealousy over her diplomatic status.⁵

Polish jealousy flared when Germany was admitted to membership in the League of Nations. Poland saw this as a direct threat to her status and protested most vigorously. The Polish protests were appeased by the League's creation of 'semi-permanent' seats.⁶ During the post-war years Poland experienced difficulty in maintaining friendly relations with Germany since the Western Powers were inviting the latter into the comity of nations.⁷ Polish relations with pre-Hitler Germany were cool but despite

3. Signed in April, 1922 between Russia and Germany for the promotion of political and economic co-operation.

4. This Alliance stipulated that close co-operation was to be had between both countries on matters of mutual interest. Should one be attacked without provocation, the other would render aid. Zebel, op. cit., 50-61.

5. Royal Institute of International Affairs, A Survey of International Affairs: 1920-3 (London, 1927), 30-31. Hereinafter cited as Survey (year).

6. The creation of the semi-permanent seats served to meet the cases of countries who were of a stature between the great and the small powers. Survey (1933), 184.

7. Ibid.

incessant German agitation for the return of Danzig and the Corridor to her, no major incidents occurred to disturb the peace of the two countries. That difficult problems existed in the relations between the two countries can be evidenced in the demand by Skrzynski at the Locarno Conference (1925) that the German-Polish border should be guaranteed by the Western powers.⁸ His request was refused.

In direct contrast to the unfriendly Polish-German relations, Polish-Russian relations after the Treaty of Riga⁹ showed substantial improvements. Russia was, as yet, hesitant about entering the sphere of capitalist states, and her government being mistress of more territory than it could use bore no animosity towards the Poles for the large tracts of White Russian and Ukrainian territories it had lost to them.

The National-Socialist Revolution in Germany in 1933 forced a complete reversal of Poland's foreign policy. Many observers predicted a further deterioration in the Polish-German relations, but, as it happened, an improvement resulted, climaxing in the Pact of January 26, 1934.

The key to this apparent contradiction lies in the situation which faced Poland in 1933. Within the same twelve months, Germany, under a

8. The especial significance of the Locarno Conference to Poland was the signature of an arbitration treaty between Germany and herself. At the same time a treaty of mutual guarantee was signed with France. The spirit of Locarno was short-lived for Germany could not be reckoned to maintain the status quo in the east. Cf. Zebel, op. cit., 597 ff.

9. Signed on March 18, 1921, at the conclusion of the Russo-Polish War, it gave Poland an eastern boundary that corresponded roughly to the one prior to the 1795 partition.

new authoritarian régime more palatable to the Polish governing classes, had renounced her membership in the League and was momentarily isolated, while Russia, on the other hand, had renounced her isolation and under the Western-oriented direction of Litvinov, Commissar for Foreign Affairs, was preparing to take her 'place in the sun'. By the end of 1933 the way was made clear for Russia to occupy the Council seat vacated by Germany. The Poles viewed this with alarm. The admission of Germany to the Council and the League during 1925-26 had been unpalatable, but the re-entry of Russia seemed an even greater threat to Poland's political role and to her very existence.¹⁰ The Poles, in the face of this western-oriented policy on the part of Russia, saw a need for closer relations with Germany. Hitler, being anti-Bolshevik, decided that the friendship of Poland would be useful. The establishment of satisfactory relations with Poland would diminish the isolated position of Germany.

The change of régime in Germany had found the two countries locked in a dispute regarding minorities in Poland. Though the question had become almost a chronic issue, in the new circumstances of the Hitler regime, a settlement was soon arrived at. This, plus the Polish calm in the face of the Hitler-Rosenberg programme¹¹ resulted in the German

10. Survey (1933), 185.

11. The programme envisaged eastern expansion, and any German moves in this direction would have resulted in Poland being engulfed.

diplomatic démarche of May 2, 1933.¹² On that day, the Polish Ambassador, Wysocki, was received by the Chancellor of the Reich. The Polish representative drew attention to the continued Nazi agitation in Danzig with its consequent deleterious effects for the Polish population in Danzig. A request was made of the Fuehrer to issue a declaration stating "that neither he nor the Government of the Reich had any desire to encroach upon Poland's rights and interests in the Free City of Danzig".

The Chancellor responded that he did not understand the concern of the Polish public regarding Danzig. The Reich Government had no intention of violating existing treaties, but it would not recognize Polish rights in Danzig beyond existent treaties.¹³

Recognizing Polish nationalism as a powerful force, Hitler impressed upon the Polish representative his realization of the need of Poland to

12. Although Toynbee in Survey (1933), 186, recorded the date as May 4, no document bearing this date exists in Republic of Poland, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Official Documents Concerning Polish-German and Polish-Soviet Relations, 1933-39. Published by authority of the Polish government by Hutchinson and Company, Limited, London. Hereinafter cited as The Polish White Book. The interview was held on May 2. The Polish White Book, Doc. No. I, 11.

13. Ibid. Wysocki remarked that Poland was vigilant to see that the rights guaranteed to her in the Treaty of Versailles were observed in the Free City. Any encroachment on these rights would result in Polish defence to the last.

exist, but that she, on her part, should understand the interests and rights of Germany.¹⁴

A communiqué issued by the Wolff Agency on May 3 announced that the representatives of both countries had agreed "to maintain their attitude and their actions strictly within the limits of the existing treaties and . . . treat their common interests dispassionately".¹⁵

All this suggests emphatically that Germany was strongly concerned with her own interests and ambitions in the Free City far beyond any Versailles stipulations or High Commissioner's control. More evidence to this effect can be gained from the German Minute drawn up by von Neurath, Minister for Foreign Affairs (until February 4, 1938), who reported Hitler to have denied to the Poles any real rights in Danzig and to have given it as his opinion that they should have been given the outlet to the sea on the eastern side of East Prussia, thus avoiding a Polish Corridor in German territory. Moreover, if the frontier between Poland and Germany remained as it was fixed at Versailles, peaceful coexistence between the two peoples would be inconceivable.¹⁶

Chancellor Hitler's speech to the Reichstag on May 17, 1933, bears out the remarks of Wysocki and echoes those of von Neurath.

If European problems had been treated reasonably, it would have been possible at once and without difficulty . . . to find a solution which would certainly have

14. The Polish White Book, Doc. No. I, 12.

15. Ibid., Doc. No. 2, 13.

16. German Foreign Office, Documents on the Events Preceding the Outbreak of the War (New York, 1940). Doc. No. 26, 47. Hereinafter cited as The German White Book.

satisfied both the understandable demands of Poland and the natural rights of Germany. The Treaty of Versailles has not found that solution. None the less, no German Government will itself break an agreement which cannot be suppressed unless it is replaced by a better¹⁷

In all probability, Hitler had been more explicit with Wysocki than the latter reported to his government and the contradiction between his report and von Neurath's minute is explainable by Wysocki's omission of the whole of Hitler's vague long-range planning, to which Hitler himself made no reference in the Reichstag speech.

Reporting a further conversation with the Chancellor on July 13, Wysocki recovered his earlier omission by quoting the German leader as remarking "that the Corridor had been created to set an enduring abyss between Germany and Poland," Nevertheless, on the practical question of tension in the Free City, the Fuehrer said that orders had been issued to reduce quarrels with Poland.¹⁸

On October 14, 1933, Germany startled the world by her sudden withdrawal from the League. On November 15, Lipski, newly appointed Polish Ambassador to Berlin, met Hitler to discuss Polish-German relations. Prior to his arrival in Berlin, Marshal Pilsudski had charged the Polish representative to confirm to the Chancellor that the security of Poland was dependent upon direct bilateral relations with other States, reinforced by their membership in the League. Since Germany had withdrawn

17. The Polish White Book, Doc. No. 3., 14-15. The German White Book, Doc. No. 29, 49.

18. The Polish White Book, Doc. No. 4, 15-16.

from the League, the second element of security had been removed. Therefore, Poland desired to have some assurances regarding her future security.

Hitler explained that Germany had no aggressive designs against Poland. Furthermore, the destruction of the Polish State "would be a misfortune for the States which would consequently become neighbours of Asia."

Though German-Polish relations had not been established on an ideal basis by the Treaty of Versailles, he would not effect a change by force.¹⁹

The German minute suppresses a large portion of the Polish account, but while giving affirmation of Germany's pacific intentions, it does remark that the Chancellor viewed the position created at Versailles as "intolerable for Germany and . . . forever . . . a source of sorrow to every

German".²⁰ The agreed communiqué on November 15 declared that complete unanimity between the two governments had been reached regarding the Polish-German situation. All future questions regarding both countries were to be dealt with by direct negotiations and no force was to be used in their mutual relations.²¹

The Polish White Book fails to supply any further information about the preliminaries of the Non-Aggression Pact. The purpose of that book is to show how the Germans destroyed the Pact, not how the Pact was arrived at. For the rest of the story of the Pact's inception one must turn to The German White Book.

19. The Polish White Book, Doc. No. 6, 17.

20. The German White Book, Doc. No. 32, 51.

21. Royal Institute of International Affairs, Documents on International Affairs: 1933 (London, 1934), 424. Hereinafter cited as Documents (year). The Polish White Book, Doc. No. 7, 19.

The German Minister at Warsaw, von Moltke, was instructed on November 24 to submit to Pilsudski a draft of a German-Polish declaration. According to von Neurath, the wording adopted in the draft was not to be in traditional concepts, but in a "form which would make the political decision of the two Governments absolutely clear and would make a deeper impression than the usual form of pact which no longer enjoys its old esteem". Also for the German representative was contained the suggestion that the declaration in no way imply the recognition of Germany's eastern frontiers, but merely act as a basis for the solution of problems.²²

On November 28 von Moltke had an audience with Marshal Pilsudski. The Marshal signified his approval of the suggested German proposal but wished that no mention be made of the Locarno Treaty of Arbitration. Though he wished to place German-Polish relations on a friendly basis, the problem was going to be difficult for there had existed a thousand years of hostility between the two nations. Consequently, the policy formulated would have to be based upon common sense and not sentiment. Moltke denied that a similar condition existed in Germany and stated that a policy of rapprochement had been instituted in his country by the control of the press.²³

22. The German White Book, Doc. No. 33, 52.

23. Ibid., Doc. No. 34, 53-54.

For a period of more than a month nothing is heard regarding further German-Polish negotiations. During the interval, Pilsudski sounded out French views regarding common action against Germany. The first approach was made through the French Military Attaché at Warsaw, but the negotiations collapsed.²⁴ Consequently, on January 9, the Polish Minister in Berlin handed to von Neurath a revised draft of the proposed declaration. The Polish suggestion that it should not apply to questions "which according to international law lie within the exclusive competence of States" aroused doubts on the part of the German representative. This, as Lipski explained on the 20th, was intended "to exclude the possibility of interference in the internal affairs of either country". Finally, it was decided that the declaration would not extend to "questions which under international law are to be regarded exclusively as the internal concern of the two States". This wording had the advantage that "it no longer excludes the possibility of a diplomatic discussion of the minorities question between Germany and Poland"²⁵

The world was astonished when on January 26, 1934, it was announced that a Non-Aggression Pact had been concluded between Germany and Poland. Under the Agreement both Governments were bound by the following principles:

24. Lewis Bernstein Namier, Diplomatic Prelude: 1938-1939 (London, 1948), 15.

25. The German White Book, Doc. No. 36, 55.

1. The general peace of Europe was contingent upon the peaceful relationship between both nations.
2. The international obligations undertaken towards third parties were in no way affected by the Declaration.
3. Under no circumstances would the contracting parties resort to the use of force.
4. The guarantee of peace as created by these principles would facilitate the settlement of problems in the economic, political, and cultural spheres.
5. The Declaration would remain in force for a period of ten years. Should the Declaration not be denounced by either party six months before its expiry, it would continue in force until six months after its denunciation by either Government.²⁶

Many 'self-styled initiates' viewed the Pact as a temporary measure pending the increase of military strength by Germany so that she could recapture the Prussian districts that she held prior to the Versailles Treaty. Hitler himself said in an interview with Hermann Rauschning, President of the Danzig Senate: "At any rate I shall give the Poles a chance. They have men who seem to be realists, and they have as little use for democracy as we have. But of course they will have to be generous in their views. Then I shall be so as well". But later in the same

26. Documents (1933), 424-25; The German White Book, Doc. No. 37, 55-56; The Polish White Book, Doc. No. 10, 20-21.

interview, though, he set the pace in what to him was its long range perspective: "All our agreements with Poland have a purely temporary significance. I have no intention of maintaining a serious friendship with Poland. I do not need to share my power with anyone".²⁷

The Non-Aggression Pact of 1934 was, from the Polish point of view, a resolution of certain large problems in Polish-German relations. Of fundamental importance was the growing necessity of establishing normal economic relations between both countries and of terminating the tariff war that had waged unabated since 1925.

Moreover the progressive deterioration in Franco-Polish relations had forced Poland to look elsewhere for protection and friendship. The Franco-Polish Alliance of 1921 had been, as always, really directed against Germany, and Polish resentment began afresh after the Franco-German rapprochement represented by the Locarno Pacts of 1925. Worse yet the advocacy by high French circles that Pomorze should be restored to Germany was a continued affront to Poland. Briand's "good Europeanism" led him to advocate French sympathy with the German view that former territories of the Reich should be returned to Germany. Poland, of course, stood in the way of an implementation of this policy, and Franco-Polish relations deteriorated rapidly as a consequence.²⁸ The break

27. Hermann Rauschning, Hitler Speaks (London, 1939), 119-121. A record of private conversations with Hitler during the time of Rauschning's Presidency of the Danzig Senate.

28. Dr. Jacob Rappaport, "Poland and Germany", Contemporary Review, 861, (May, 1939), 561.

finally came in the spring of 1933 when France expressed her desire to adhere to the Four-Power Pact, a Mussolini-inspired pact wherein Great Britain, France, Germany and Italy formed themselves into a sort of little League of Nations, yet apparently, from an outsider's point of view, grossly in defiance of the League spirit. Formal protests by the Little Entente Powers and Poland against the French desire had no effect and France adhered to the Pact, alienated Poland and thus, by depriving her of her principal ally, isolated her. Pilsudski, realizing this, made the obvious counter of opposing the Four-Power Pact with a German-Polish Pact.

The Polish-German Agreement was helped by the political attitudes of certain Polish circles. The National Democrats who formally regarded Germany as a foe now believed that the alliance would prove useful. The Conservatives viewed the Pact with favour for they believed that with the help of the Third Reich, Poland could defeat Russia and annex the Ukraine, always an aim of Polish landowners who had lost estates to the Soviets. The Conservative idea was also adhered to by Pilsudski's followers who believed that the greatness of Poland could only come about if she united herself with the Ukraine and thus formed one federal state.²⁹

Von Moltke, German Ambassador at Warsaw, reported Colonel Beck as very pleased with the Polish attitude towards the pact. Beck had summoned him to an interview in which he said that the Polish reaction to the pact was "extraordinary and greater than he, Beck, had anticipated".

29. Rappaport, loc. cit., 563.

The public announcement of the pact "in the largest concert hall in Warsaw" had called forth "warm applause" and provincial newspapers had had to triple their editions. This showed, continued Moltke, still apparently quoting Beck, although possibly through a filter of Nazi phraseology, that

after the failure of international conferences and pacts, a courageous policy revealing a spirit of leadership could create a profound impression, especially when it responded to a general longing for peace.³⁰

The Soviets greeted the Pact "with an outward display of equanimity and with complete if cynical understanding". Pilsudski is said to have informed and assured Moscow that "no engagements with Germany that contained any threat, overt or secret, to Soviet interests, or might endanger Poland's new and friendly relations with Moscow" had been entered into.³¹

The French Government felt less confident in its relationship with Poland, and saw that the "weaker links in the French alliance system might find it necessary to reconsider their allegiances".³²

The Non-Aggression Pact was ratified in Warsaw on February 24, 1934.³³ On the 26th was announced from Berlin a "propaganda alliance that was unique in international affairs".³⁴ Members of the propaganda

30. ^{The} German White Book, Doc. No. 38, 57.

31. George Slocombe, A History of Poland (London, 1939), 118.

32. Frank P. Chambers, Christina Phelps Harris and Charles C. Bayley, This Age of Conflict (New York, 1950), 560. In addition to showing concern over the German-Polish Pact of 1934, France was disturbed by the fact that within twenty years, the population of Poland would be as large as France. Hence, Poland would have to be entitled to at least "respectful consideration".

33. S. B. Fay, "The Pact with Poland", Current History, 40 (April-September, 1934), 102.

34. Ibid., 103.

agencies and the press of both countries agreed to maintain constant co-operation in public relations. Hostile propaganda was to be discontinued and for some time press comments in both nations were free from vituperation.

Rapid progress was made towards the betterment of communications and towards economic co-operation. Already on January 1, 1934, an agreement regulating frontier traffic had come into force. This agreement had been signed on December 22, 1931, but its ratification had been withheld, temporarily because of the strained relations between the two countries. Regular air service between Germany and Poland commenced on May 1 in accordance with an agreement signed on January 21, 1934.³⁵ March 7 saw the signatures of both German and Polish representatives affixed to an agreement that put an end to the 'customs war' which had continued since 1925. It provided for the removal of discriminatory measures and of petty restrictions on the flow of traffic between the two countries.³⁶ Trade discussions were entered into and despite numerous difficulties a 'compensation agreement' was reached on October 9. Lasting for a period of one year, Poland was allowed to export to Germany agricultural and industrial raw materials totalling 10,000,000 marks. She, in turn, was to receive German machinery.

35. Survey (1935), I., 204.

36. Fay, loc. cit., 103.

Conferences regarding the improvement of cultural relations between the two countries continued during 1934-5. An agreement was even reached regarding the revision of Polish and German history texts in view of the recently founded friendship.³⁷

All of these agreements were followed by the visits to Poland of high-ranking Nazis. In the early part of June, Goebbels travelled to Warsaw where he spoke on the philosophy of National-Socialism. His visit was the occasion of demonstrations by Jews, Socialists and Catholics.

In regard to formal diplomatic relations both Governments, in October, raised their representatives to the rank of Ambassador. This move was interpreted by Poland as a sign that she had attained the status of a Great Power.³⁸

The process of direct negotiation and of German alliance having contained within itself the prospects of such a resounding success, it was not to be expected that the Poles would react with any enthusiasm to any collective action on the eastern frontier, particularly when this was promoted jointly by France and Russia. The so-called Eastern Locarno was foredoomed, therefore, to failure. This Eastern Pact of Non-Aggression and Mutual Assistance was the proposal of Barthou, the French Foreign Minister, and was discussed with Litvinov at Geneva on May 18, 1934. Barthou had devised an interesting idea of safeguarding the peace

37. Ian F. D. Morrow, The Peace Settlement in the German-Polish Borderlands (London, 1936), 468.

38. Survey (1935), I, 205.

of Europe by the creation of an extensive series of interlocking 'Circles'. The first of these interlocking mutual-aid agreements was to consist of Pacts between France, Russia, the Little Entente, Poland, the Baltic States and Germany, and was to remain open to other Continental countries. The second 'Circle' was to cover the Mediterranean area, and presumed the reaching of an agreement between the principal Mediterranean naval powers, Great Britain and Italy. The third 'Circle' was to consist of a naval agreement pertaining to the Pacific, and the proposed signatory powers would be United States of America, Great Britain, and possibly Japan.³⁹

The Franco-Soviet proposals found little support at first but during the months of June and July considerable redrafting of the proposals at the Quai d'Orsay in collaboration with officials of the Soviet Embassy in Paris resulted in a considerable measure of agreement.

On July 13, Sir John Simon commended the French proposal, which soon met with the approval of Italy and Russia.⁴⁰ However, being opposed by Germany and Poland, the Eastern Pact collapsed. Germany's refusal was based on the grounds that the Agreement bore many of the characteristics of the revival of the Franco-Russian Alliance of 1895 and had the implications of an impending Einkreisung or encirclement. Furthermore,

39. Documents (1934), 173-174.

40. Ibid.

Germany was not prepared to guarantee the eastern frontiers and it did not lie within her power to prevent the outbreak of inter-State conflicts - especially in the East.⁴¹ The Polish view became known through the newspaper Gazeta Polska which on September 12, reported that the Polish Foreign Minister had intimated to the British Government, through Sir Anthony Eden, that Poland could not participate in the Eastern Pact of Mutual Assistance as sponsored by France. "Warsaw takes the view that her present alliances with Germany on the West and Soviet Russia on the East adequately meet her political requirements".⁴²

"The Eastern Locarno", as far as Poland was concerned, "meant that the commencement of hostilities between France and Germany would subject Polish soil to proselytizing Communists from the Red Army or revisionists from the Reichswehr The invitation of German or Russian troops was far easier than the assurances of their departure at the cessation of hostilities".⁴³

Poland was then having nothing to do with treaties of collective security, particularly under such auspices. Individual negotiation was sufficient for her purpose, and the new, strong German alliance and the

41. Documents (1935), 167.

42. Gazeta Polska, September 12, 1934. Cited in Keesing's Contemporary Archives: Weekly Diary of World Events (London, 1940), 1364C. Hereinafter cited as Archives.

43. Ibid.

old, weak Soviet alliance of July 25, 1932, strengthened in May, 1934, were the corner-stones of her foreign policy.

Despite the apparent success of German-Polish relations in 1934, after the Non-Aggression Pact, the problem of the German minority still remained an irritant. After World War I, the Paris Peace Conference in order to secure and safeguard the existence of Polish minorities within the political boundaries of Poland after 1918 forced Poland to accept the Minorities Treaty of June 28, 1919. This was bitterly opposed by Paderewski; the more so that, while the other defeated powers and so-called "succession" states had to accept minorities agreements, Germany was not subjected to such an encumbrance on her sovereignty.

Although the German Republic was not bound by a minorities treaty, the protection of minorities in German and Polish Upper Silesia was governed by the Germano-Polish Convention of 1922 which expired in 1937.

Also concluded between Danzig and Poland was the Treaty of November 9, 1920, which provided for the application of the provisions of the Polish Minorities Treaty in the Free City. Provisions regarding languages and the establishment of educational institutions were provided for in the Treaty of October 24, 1921.

Hopes that the problem of Poland's minorities could be solved by the Paris Peace Conference proved illusory. The minorities problem everywhere was one of the thorniest in the period between wars. Eventually, one of these minorities problems was to become a major cause of the Second World War.

According to one leading authority, the protection of the minorities by the League, though adequate and beneficial in some countries, proved inadequate in the German-Polish relationship because:

1. The majority-minority group relationships were powerful, the attempt to restrain the dynamics of these relations by legalistic forms, or the so-called "minorities treaties" proved wrong.

2. The League's failure to realize that the majority required protection against the minority. Thus, Hitler was able to use the principle of self-determination to bring about a conflict with Poland.⁴⁴

Without analyzing the operation of the international guarantee by the League, it should be said that Poland resisted any attempt to improve the League's procedure regarding minorities complaints. In fact, she sought to render them more difficult.

This effort was successful until the entrance of Germany into the League. Then the German minorities acquired a champion and the demand that the League's obligation as guarantor be enforced was loudly voiced by Stresemann. Moreover, he threatened to bring the entire question of the right of minorities to petition before the Council on the grounds that these petitions were being blocked by Polish officials. In general, minorities committees of the League were most reluctant to draw information from every source but from 1920 to January, 1931, 525 petitions had been

44. Joseph S. Rousek, "Minorities" in Bernadotte F. Schmitt, Poland (Los Angeles, 1945), 150.

received by the League. Of this number, 155 had been addressed from Poland's minorities.⁴⁵ Complaints arose out of the acquisition of Polish nationality by former German nationals, the question of German schools in Polish Upper Silesia, the expropriation of settlers of German lineage in Poland, the freedom of worship, and the equality of treatment in law. Largely because of the violence against the German minority in the Polish elections of November, 1930, the Council acted.⁴⁶

Germany's intervention on behalf of its minorities was bitterly resented by Poland. The Poles were not slow to see that Berlin was promoting revisionist propaganda. This realization was particularly bitter because Poland could not retaliate in kind; Germany was under no legal obligation to protect Polish minorities in Germany.

A definite step against the protection of minorities by the League was taken by the Polish Government in the fall of 1934.

Reports from the German Consul-General at Kattowitz on April 15 and 28, 1934, complained of Polish intervention in school activities. Attempts were made by the Poles to intimidate and terrorize (as the Germans put it) parents who had entered their children in German-language minority schools.⁴⁷ Complaints of a similar nature were forwarded to the German Foreign Office from Thorn. Relations between Poles and Germans living

45. Roucek, "Minorities", loc. cit., 153.

46. Ibid. He does not specify what action the Council took.

47. The German White Book, Doc. Nos. 43, 44, 61.

near the frontier failed to show any improvement. From Marienwerder to Marienburg, German propaganda continued unabated.⁴⁸

The question of minorities came before the Fifteenth League Assembly on September 15, when Colonel Beck stated that "Poland would, in the future, refuse all co-operation which would assist international bodies in supervising her execution of the provisions for the protection of minorities".⁴⁹ That same evening the Polish Minister informed the State Secretary at the German Foreign Office that the relations of the Polish Government with regard to the German minority would not be affected by the latest Polish action. Von Buelow remarked that the Polish laws concerning the minorities were inadequate, but that a formal pronouncement would be made later on.⁵⁰ When the Polish representative remarked that Poland could no longer suffer such a déclassement, [as was represented by the Minorities Treaty] he was told that the obligations imposed on Poland with regard to minorities were the counterpart of the boundary established at the Paris Peace Conference.⁵¹ The stipulations regarding the protection of minorities in the treaties of 1919 were a compensation for territorial adjustments. This was true in particular of the German-Polish frontier as shown by Article 83 of the Treaty of Versailles. The cancellation of Polish obligations meant the revival of the entire territorial problem.⁵²

48. E. Wiskemann, "Poland and Germany To-day", The Fortnightly, 144, (September, 1935), 304.

49. The German White Book, Doc. No. 49, 65.

50. The German White Book, Doc. No. 50, 66.

51. Ibid.

52. Ibid., Doc. No. 51, 66-67.

But this apparently intransigent position was reversed within a month. On November 14, Moltke was instructed to tell Beck that Germany would not force Poland to co-operate with the League of Nations nor would she demand that German-Polish relations be brought before an international body. Rather, direct exchange of opinions as envisaged by the German-Polish Declaration would help towards the settlement of the issue. This did not mean that Germany disinterested herself in the fate of her Volksgenossen, or fellow Germans abroad. While making references to their grievances, Moltke declared that "the Germans have not the slightest intention of making their support of the German minority in Poland . . . a lever for raising frontier questions".⁵³

In a conversation held on November 19 between the two men, Moltke declared that his aim was to render relations between both nations more intimate. Beck replied that the Polish move was dictated by the "incredible treatment which the League of Nations had recently seen fit to accord to Poland".⁵⁴ Moreover the League consisted of persons who lacked an understanding of facts and created annoyances to others. The rights of the German minority would be safeguarded by the Polish Constitution and responsible officials would be duly notified. The Polish discourse was completed by remarks on the harmful influence of the Jewish representatives in the Polish Press and on the action that would be taken to restrain them. Moltke, in his concluding remarks, expressed the conviction that the Poles understood the interests of the Germans in their own minority.⁵⁵

53. The German White Book, Doc. No. 52, 69.

54. The German White Book, Doc. No. 53, 71.

55. Ibid., 72. The Polish announcement was met with formal objections by both France and Great Britain.

Now all of this, and particularly this last statement of Beck to von Moltke, is most extraordinary because of the differences over minorities prior to the conclusion of the Non-Aggression Pact. Has it been falsely reported in The German White Book, which we have been using? There seems no particular reason to doubt the honesty of the reporting. Unfortunately even the anti-Semitism here brought out has deep roots in Polish history (although in all fairness to the Poles it must be stated that Polish anti-Semitism, unpleasant as it is, is a vastly different kettle of fish from the Nazi extreme of anti-Semitism). It is impossible to resist the conclusion, then, that from the Polish view the German attitude must have represented a tremendous justification for the new policy. "The German Government has not the slightest intention of making their support of the German minority in Poland . . . a lever for raising frontier questions".⁵⁶ After all these years of tension the western frontier^{was} now calm and stable. What a tremendous accomplishment! Let it be suggested that this was only the German lion making a tactical move to reassure the Polish lamb. Were not the heirs of Sobieski themselves lions?

Throughout the next year Poland continued to be most carefully cultivated by Germany.

In January, 1935, Field Marshal Goering visited Poland where, amongst other festivities he was invited to a hunting-party at Bialowieza.

56. The German White Book, Doc. No. 52, 69.

Here he had talks with the Polish President. Later, more formal conversations with members of the government and with Marshal Pilsudski himself took place in the Polish capital. The Reich Government, he said, was anxious that Polish opposition to the Eastern Pact of Mutual Assistance should be continued. It was also anxious to ascertain the Polish views regarding possible German re-armament.⁵⁷

Count Szembek's Note on the Field Marshal's visit to Warsaw reveals a curious mixture of insight and self-deception about Germany's attitude towards Poland. Goering had stated that "theoretically one could imagine a new partition of Poland by means of a German-Russian collaboration", but it would be impossible to attain such an end "partly because of the strength and dynamic power of Poland, partly because partitioning would create a common German-Russian frontier, and this would be highly dangerous to Germany". Some suggestions of an Anti-Russian Alliance and the establishment of the Ukraine as a Polish sphere of influence were hinted at. A suggested Polish-German attack on Russia by the departing German representative caused Pilsudski to stiffen and he gave it to be understood that it would be impossible for Poland to be continuously on guard along the Polish-Soviet frontier.⁵⁸

On January 22, after the annual banquet given in honour of the foreign diplomats, Hitler held a private conversation with Lipski on the

57. Survey (1935), I, 205-6.

58. ^{The} Polish White Book, Docs. Nos. 15, 25, and 16, 26.

subject of Polish-German relations. He expressed the view "that the theory of Polish-German hereditary enmity was very unsound". The history of both countries in the past revealed co-operation when danger threatened from the East and it might become necessary for a joint defence against Russia. In his view "the policy of former German Governments, and in particular of the Reichswehr, which had aimed at uniting with Russia against Poland, was the greatest of political mistakes". Moreover, he said, Germany would not neglect to continue her co-operation with Poland and eventually a lasting friendship would be set up.⁵⁹

Whatever assurances Hitler had granted Lipski, a recrudescence of friction occurred in the Polish Corridor during the month of April. The adoption of the slogan, 'Back to the Reich', the use of mass propaganda, intimidation, and recourse to actual violence by the Nazis during the election campaign in Danzig alienated the Poles. A number of Germans were arrested for subversive political activities, and the renewal of Polish-German friction was avoided by the Reich refusing to take offence.⁶⁰

In the same month, on April 25, Goering repaid Polish hospitality by inviting Lipski to Schorfheide. Goering told the Polish representative that Hitler had requested him to pay special attention to Polish-German relations. Though he was aware of considerable activity being stirred up in various quarters against the maintenance of suitable Polish-

59. The Polish White Book, Doc. No. 13, 23-24, and No. 14, 25.

60. Survey (1935), I, 206.

German relations, Germany's and the Chancellor's objective would not permit any deviations from the course of peace.⁶¹

On May 18, 1935, Goering represented Germany in Cracow at the funeral of Marshal Pilsudski. He took the opportunity of holding further discussions with Polish officials. At the same time in Cracow he met Laval, and it is presumed that the question of an Eastern European Pact of Non-Aggression formed one of the subjects of discussion. Laval must have been made aware that the conclusion of the Franco-Russian Pact and the similar Czechoslovak-Russian agreement diminished the prospects of German participation in such a pact.⁶²

Three days later, on May 21, Hitler presented to the Reichstag a comprehensive review of Germany's foreign policy. Turning to Polish-German relations, he remarked that a strengthening of friendship with Poland was desired and that the Reich would observe the terms of the Non-Aggression Pact of 1934. (There was, however, no suggestion that the Third Reich had abandoned her territorial claims in the east).⁶³

The next day Lipski was received by the Chancellor. After expressing his sympathy over the death of Pilsudski Hitler dwelt upon his policy towards Poland. The Rapallo policy, represented by Schleicher and Groener, had been dangerous to Poland and its revocation by the Chancellor was important. The fact that Schleicher had helped to "build up the Soviet military power was ample justification for the end that befell him".⁶⁴

The
61. Polish White Book, Doc. No. 17, 26-27.

62. Survey (1935), I, 80-83. These two pacts were pacts of non-aggression and mutual aid.

The
63. Polish White Book, Doc. No. 18, 28.

64. Ibid., Doc. No. 19, 29.

In his Eastern policy, Hitler declared "that a rapprochement with Poland was more advantageous to Germany than uneasy relations with Russia. Russia is Asia Germany was faced with the problem of finding areas for economic expansion or space for its population. Poland had not and could not provide either."⁶⁵

The Chancellor then turned to the expression of an idea of the possible building of a railroad and motor road through the Pomorze. Here was a significant hint of German demands in the early months of 1939.⁶⁶

At the beginning of July, 1935, Beck visited Berlin. The topics of discussions between Beck and his hosts were mainly the renewed financial crisis in Danzig, the Anglo-German naval agreement (about which Poland felt uneasy because of the possible expansion of the German naval force), and the recently concluded Franco-Russian pact of Mutual Assistance.

A communiqué issued on July 4 remarked that the conversations had been "in an atmosphere of frankness", and that the two States "would devote all their energies to the cause of peace in Europe".⁶⁷

Goering entertained some distinguished Polish guests - Prince Radziwill, General Fabrycy, Count Potocki, and General Gömbös at a hunting-party in September, and in October Ribbentrop was a guest at

The
65. Polish White Book, Doc. No. 19, 29.

66. Ibid., 29-30.

67. Ibid., Doc. No. 20, 30-31.

a Polish hunting-party.⁶⁸ Diplomatic entertainment continued at an accelerated pace.

On December 18, Lipski was received by Hitler and was reminded that a rapprochement with Russia was impossible. For Germany, "European solidarity ended at the Polish-Soviet frontier,"; pacts could only be concluded with states who "embraced the same principles in international policy".⁶⁹

There was thus an apparent harmony over questions of major policy although even here one detects a more didactic tone even than usual in this latest pronunciamento of Hitler to Lipski. All through this harmony, however, on high questions of international policy, German-Polish antagonism continued unabated in the Danzig-Pomorze area. It is time to examine this in some detail.

68. Survey (1935), I, 297.

69. The Polish White Book, Doc. No. 21, 31.

CHAPTER III.

DANZIG

Who rules over the mouth of the Vistula and the City of Danzig will be more master of Poland than the King who rules there! -- Frederick the Great.

Since its founding at the mouth of the Vistula, Danzig's history has been shared by both the Poles and the Germans. In early years, it not only formed a part of the Hanseatic League but experienced the invasion of the Teutonic Knights. Both left their imprint. In the fifteenth century, Danzig became a part of Poland and substantial progress was made in cultural and economic spheres. However, the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were marked by partitions, wars, and economic disturbances. All these had their influence on the future of the city. Eventually, with the Second Partition, the city was reduced to a Prussian seaport and capital, a status which it retained until 1919. At the end of World War I it was given the sovereign status as a Free City under the supervision of the League of Nations. It then became a source of irritation to both Poles and Germans until the outbreak of World War II.

When World War I commenced there was little to distinguish Danzig from other parts of eastern Germany. A major German naval arsenal, she endured the military misfortunes and privations of the German Empire in the latter days of the war and penalties of defeat at the end.

At the Peace Conference, all matters pertaining to Poland had been charged to the Cambon Commission. The Commission decided that Danzig

should become an integral part of Poland. Strong objections on the part of the British representative, Lloyd George, and of others resulted in the peace-makers establishing it as an autonomous and sovereign free city under the protection of the League of Nations. This decision was received with little satisfaction by the populace and monster demonstrations took place in the months of March and April, 1919. They had no effect on the Powers' decision. On January 10, 1920, formal ratification of the Treaty of Versailles gave it law. In Article 100 Germany renounced all rights in the territory of Danzig. Under Article 103 a constitution was to be drafted by a Constituent Assembly in agreement with a High Commissioner appointed by the League of Nations.

May 16, 1920 saw an election held in Danzig for the purpose of setting up a Constituent Assembly. A draft constitution was adopted on August 11, 1920, and forwarded to the Council for approval. While acceptance was granted on November 17, proposed minor changes caused the Constitution to be the subject of prolonged talks so that formal consent by the League Council was not announced until May, 1922.¹

Sir Reginald Tower, the League High Commissioner assigned to the Constituent Assembly the task of drafting a convention to be concluded with Poland in accordance with Article 104 of the Treaty of Versailles. The task proved difficult since the Polish and the Danzig drafts did not conform with each other. Had the Polish suggestions been accepted, there

1. Ian F. D. Morrow, The Peace Settlement in the German-Polish Borderlands (London, 1936), 36.

would have been established in Danzig a Polish military garrison and naval base, as well as Polish currency and law.

The final court of appeal for Danzig would have been the Supreme Court of Poland. The Poles, somewhat naturally, sought to establish the maximum Polish influence possible within the framework of the Versailles settlement. The Danzig draft convention, equally naturally, sought to establish the maximum freedom for Danzigers and a minimum of Polish control, equally within the same Versailles frame. Conflicts of opinion over the two drafts resulted in negotiations being transferred from Danzig to Paris, where the Principal Allied and Associated Powers achieved a compromise formula acceptable to both parties. The Convention was signed on November 9, 1920, by Paderewski for Poland and Burgomaster Sahm for Danzig.

According to its provisions Poland was to have a "diplomatic" representative and not the "resident" that she had asked for. Any treaty or international agreements concerning the Free City could not be concluded by Poland unless Danzig had been informed. Furthermore, the High Commissioner had the right of veto over any such treaty. Danzig ships were permitted to fly the flag of the Free City. Polish customs administration was to be handled by Danzig officials under the supervision of authorities in Warsaw, represented in Danzig by Polish inspectors. Control and administration of the port and waterways was entrusted to a locally appointed Harbour and Waterways Commission. Provisions were made with regard to the minorities. Danzig was to apply the minority clauses

of the Versailles Treaty in regard to the Polish minority within its territory. One of the most important stipulations of the Convention was Article 39. It read as follows:

Any differences arising between Poland and the Free City of Danzig in regard to the present Treaty or to any other subsequent agreements, arrangements or conventions, or to any matter affecting the relations between Poland and the Free City, shall be submitted by one or the other party to the decision of the High Commissioner, who shall, if he deems it necessary, refer the matter to the Council of the League of Nations. The two parties retain the right of appeal to the Council of the League of Nations.²

The Convention was signed in Paris on November 9, 1920, and ratified shortly thereafter by the two contracting parties. The coming into force of the Convention on November 15, 1920 resulted in the Allied troops being withdrawn. On December 6, the Constituent Assembly elected the first Senate with Sahn as President. Under his command Danzig launched forth on its stormy voyage on the sea of European politics.

Why did arsenals of claims, counter-claims and arguments accumulate over the course of time? Though many arguments have been advanced, one appears to be the most outstanding. Poland felt that her historic claims to Danzig had been ignored, and, therefore, her efforts were directed towards increasing her rights in Danzig. Germany and Danzig both felt that the Peace Conference had departed from the principle of Nationality. Thus the object of Germany and Danzig was reunion at the earliest convenient occasion.

2. Morrow, op. cit., 45.

From 1920 Danzig-Polish relations were characterized by a spirit of enmity. Disputes arose on all manner of subjects, and the Council of the League spent much time on trivial matters which might better have been resolved by some subordinate body. Between 1920 and 1931, the official publication of the Danzig Government, Danzig vor dem Volkerbund contained more than five stout volumes of reports of Danzig-Polish incidents.

The Polish-Danzig atmosphere of hostility was heightened on July 22, 1920, when dock workers refused to handle war material consigned to Poland. The Bolshevik armies were on the outskirts of Warsaw, and the refusal to handle the munitions was regarded by the Poles as "a stab in the back". What the Poles failed to realize was that Danzig feared a Russian annexation of the Free City if the Russians were given the provocation of a violation of Danzig neutrality. But the Poles found their security threatened by their lack of control over Danzig and finally built the purely Polish seaport of Gdynia. In addition, Poland gained on October 31, 1925, an area known as Westerplatte, to serve as a storage for Polish munitions and to be guarded by a Polish military detachment.

Another dispute which did not justify the public and international commotion it caused was that of the Polish mailboxes. One of the Polish rights specified in the German-Polish Convention had been that of maintaining a Polish postal service in certain specified areas within the Free City. Polish mailboxes set up January 5, 1925, in pursuance of this right were discovered defaced on the morning of the 6th. The Polish Commissioner-General, Strasburger, protested to the Senate for the action,

threatening that if the Danzig police were incapable of maintaining order in the Free City, the Poles would. The dispute immediately came to the attention of the High Commissioner who ruled that the establishment of Polish mail-boxes outside the Hevetiusplatz was not permitted under Articles 29 and 30 of the Convention of Paris. Not happy with this ruling, Poland appealed to the Council of the League. At their meeting on March 13, a lively discussion ensued between Count Skrzynski and Herr Sahm. On the motion of Council rapporteur, Señor Quiñones de León, the Council sought the advisory opinion of the Court of International Justice. On May 16, the Court delivered its opinion:- Polish mail-boxes could be set up outside the Hevetiusplatz, and Polish postal authorities could deliver mail outside this area. On September 19, the League accepted the decision of the Court. Danzig and Poland both accepted the League ruling and the dispute was closed.³

The transition from post-boxes to warships seems violent. But both were instruments of policy. The question of the Polish port d'attaché continued to plague the relations of both countries for more than a decade. The dispute centred around the right of Polish war vessels to access and anchorage in the port of Danzig. Occupying the attention both of the Council and of the International Court of Justice, the dispute was not settled until both parties mutually drew up a protocol that conferred "upon Polish warships visiting Danzig certain privileges beyond those customarily granted by international usage. It was agreed that for three years no restrictions should be placed either on numbers of Polish war vessels entering the harbour or their length of stay".⁴

3. Morrow, op. cit., 87-89.

4. Ibid., 106.

The munitions strike of July 22, 1920, caused Poland to put forth a demand that she be granted a site in the harbour of Danzig to be used for an arsenal. After lengthy negotiations had failed, the High Commissioner chose the Westerplatte. On October 31, 1925, the site was ceded to Poland and she was permitted to introduce a detachment of 88 Polish officers and men to guard the arsenal. During 1927 and 1928 a dispute arising out of a conflict between territorial and Danzig rights in the Westerplatte confronted the Council. Negotiations led to an agreement on August 14, 1928, whereby Poland undertook to observe safety regulations and the Danzig police were granted the right of inspection. After eight years the controversy seemed to have reached its close.

During the period of German inflation, the Free City had introduced a currency of her own - the Danzig gulden. Poland from the outset attempted to make the zloty the currency of the Free City, and thereby, of course, in measure to dominate the economic life of the Free City, but the attempt was not successful. Though the Convention of Paris provided for the unification of currencies when circumstances became favorable, Danzig had no desire to repeat its inflationary experience in the continual depreciation of the Polish zloty after 1925. A decree of the Polish Minister for Transport on October 25, 1932, stating that all railway charges were to be made in Polish currency aroused the Danzig populace to white heat. Intervention by the High Commissioner caused the Poles to withdraw the decree. But the main conflict went on.

Another continuing Polish-Danzig issue centred around the purely

Polish port of Gdynia, constructed after the incident of July 22, 1920. Once the port was established, it was also strongly felt by the Poles that a Polish naval base on the coast of the Polish Corridor would act as a barrier against the return of Pomorze to Germany. During the construction German experts scoffed at the Polish notion of building a harbour soon to be choked with sand. But Gdynia grew into one of the most extraordinary technical feats of the immediate post-war period and Danzig began to worry greatly about the competition and its effect on Danzig trade. The Danzig-Gdynia question was born.

The Danzig worry was amply justified, as the following figures evidence:

Turnover in Shipping Traffic, Port of Gdynia, 1924-32⁵

<u>Year</u>	<u>Imports</u>	<u>Exports</u>	<u>Total Traffic</u>
1924	981	9,186	10,167
1925	1,646	53,925	55,571
1926	310	404,251	404,561
1927	6,411	891,683	898,094
1928	192,711	1,765,058	1,957,769
1929	329,644	2,492,858	2,822,502
1930	504,117	3,121,631	3,625,748
1931	558,549	4,741,565	5,300,114
1932	432,888	4,761,400	5,194,288
1933(6 months)	368,093	2,261,577	2,629,670

The figures should be compared with those of Danzig.⁶

1924	738,071	1,636,485	2,374,556
1925	670,779	2,031,969	2,722,748
1926	640,695	5,659,604	6,300,299
1927	1,517,194	6,380,419	7,897,613
1928	1,832,409	6,783,273	8,615,682
1929	1,792,951	6,766,699	8,559,650
1930	1,090,631	7,122,462	8,213,093
1931	754,300	7,576,205	8,330,505
1932(6 months)	428,103	5,047,949	5,476,052

5. Casimir Smogorzewski, Poland's Access to the Sea (London, 1934), 342.

6. Ibid., 308.

By 1931 Gdynia ranked second to Danzig, but while Danzig remained stationary, Gdynia continued to gain until in 1932 she had almost overtaken her rival. Danzig degenerated into a place for loading bulk goods, and by 1938 was definitely inferior to Gdynia, as the following breakdown of imports and exports evidences:

	<u>Imports</u>	<u>Exports</u>	<u>Total Traffic</u>
Gdynia	1,526,000	7,646,000	9,172,000
Danzig	1,562,000	5,563,000	7,125,000 ⁷

The economic rivalry was reflected in an endless legal wrangle. Danzig held that Poland was obliged to utilize her port facilities to their fullest capacity. She charged that she had been separated from Germany for the express purpose of serving as Poland's outlet to the sea. Poland refused to admit to any of Danzig's arguments. Attempts to settle the economic situation failed, and the dispute was submitted in 1931 to the then High Commissioner, Count Gravina. After hearing a Committee of Jurists, he decided on October 26, 1931, that "Poland was obliged to make full use of the port of Danzig, but that this obligation did not affect the right of Poland to open other ports on the Baltic coast".⁸ Neither party was satisfied and the matter was referred as usual to the Council of the League. It was in turn referred to the Committee of

7. Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, The French Yellow Book: Diplomatic Documents Concerning the Events and Negotiations Which Preceded the Opening of Hostilities Between Germany on the One Hand, and Poland, Great Britain and France on the Other (1938-1939). Published by Hutchinson and Company, Limited, London. Doc. No. 126, 145. Hereinafter cited as The French Yellow Book.

8. Morrow, op. cit., 136.

Jurists to reconsider its previous findings. On May 10, the Council on the motion of Anthony Eden, rapporteur for Danzig affairs, gave approval to the Committee's report. The use of Danzig was considered to be an obligation of Poland but Danzig's demands that all Polish goods be transhipped through Danzig's harbour unless a land route were used was not allowed. Thus the matter stood when Hitler became Chancellor of the Reich.

Hitler's assumption of the Chancellorship aroused speculation about its possible effects on the existent situation in the Free City. A crisis occurred in the month of March, 1933, over the Polish munitions depot at the Westerplatte. Polish authorities, believing that a Nazi coup against the Westerplatte was imminent, increased the number of men from 80 to 200.⁹ Feelings and excitement in the Free City ran dangerously high. The Polish action was protested by the President of the Danzig Senate, Dr. Ziehm, and the matter was communicated by the High Commissioner to the Council of the League. On March 14, Paul-Boncour of France induced Beck to settle the matter without the Council's intervention, and on the 16, the Danzig harbour police were placed under the control of the Harbour Board. With this, the Polish reinforcements were withdrawn.¹⁰

9. Survey (1933), 187.

10. Survey (1933), 187.

But this dangerous situation was resolved only to make way for a completely new and far more difficult political climate in Danzig. It was perhaps to be expected that when Hitler came to Power in Germany his first two points of attack should have been Danzig and the Saar District, the two almost uniformly German districts which had been detached from Germany at Versailles. Certainly Hitler's accession was followed by a tremendous increase of activity on the part of Danzig's Nazis who, insignificant before, had grown in numbers and influence as their German counterparts had grown and who now were made the beneficiaries of all the help, financial and otherwise, which their German colleagues were able to give them. The principal career Nazis in the Danzig party were Arthur Greiser and Albert Forster, the Danzig gauleiter, but the Danzig Nazi party contained at this time one of the few intellectually and morally respectable men that the party had been able to recruit in the person of Hermann Rauschning, a Prussian junker native to the Danzig area who saw in the National Socialist party an instrument for the regeneration and recreation of German national feeling and who made the common contemporary misjudgement that the excesses of the Party were merely incidental and would disappear with the responsibilities of office. Although Rauschning was a member of the party it is perhaps more correct to call him a Nazi collaborator than to dismiss him as a Nazi like any other party member. Neither can he be dismissed as a figurehead on the Hindenburg order. In fact the history of the first two years of Nazi control in Danzig is largely the history of Rauschning's quick disillusionment with Nazism and of the

Nazi party's strenuous but finally ineffective attempts to hold him to the party line. He was too big to ignore and too honest either to subscribe to Nazism or to be controlled by the party.

Following the usual Hitler recipe of mob violence, skulduggery, and emotional appeals on the lowest plane, the Nazis won 38 of the 72 seats in the Danzig Volkstag in the election of May 28, 1933. This majority, bare as it was and curiously paralleling the apparently tenuous original control of the Reichstag by Hitler, was sufficient to give the Nazis complete control of the Danzig administration, since the Senate was elected by secret ballot of the Volkstag. Immediately the spoils of office were divided and the respectable Rauschning became President of the Senate with Greiser as his Vice-President. Forster's Gauleiter office had of course itself acquired new stature with the accession of the Nazis to power.

It was of course necessary for a time to mask the new régimes as peace loving. Before the elections were held Hitler met the Polish ambassador to Berlin on May 3, 1933, and assured him that matters between the two countries (and Danzig was one of the most significant points at issue) would be treated "dispassionately and within the framework of existing treaties".¹¹ He was echoed in Danzig. While yet the elections were still in progress Forster and Rauschning called on Rosting, the

11. The Polish White Book, Doc. No. 2, 13.

League High Commissioner, and Papée, the Polish representative in Danzig. They delivered the most solemn assurances that the National-Socialist party desired peace with Poland, that Polish rights and personal property would be respected, that treaties with Poland would be honored, and that the constitution of the Free City would be adhered to.

How valid these assurances were may be judged from the immediate post-election attack on the Jews and on all Opposition members. By the autumn of 1933 Greiser judged himself sufficiently powerful to inform the members of the Centre, the Social Democrat, and German nationalist parties that their parties could no longer be tolerated and were now to be eliminated. An emphatically unfriendly editorial comment on this pronouncement by the Danziger Volkstimme and the Danziger Landeszeitung led to the suppression of these newspapers, a direct violation of the constitution in defiance of the solemn Forster-Rauschnig assurances at the time of the election. In this case the matter was referred to the League which acted promptly for once and in support of the Danzig constitution. The suspension of the two newspapers was lifted, Rauschnig assured the League authorities that future legislative action would be within the framework of the constitution, and the incident was closed.

But it set the tone for the future, a calculated mixture of action in one direction masked by pious protestations of an immediate return to an earlier and more honorable direction. The action was the reality and the protestations were only tactical. It was the tragedy of the period that everyone except the Communists, Winston Churchill and the post-1934

Hermann Rauschning seemed to exist in a tacit conspiracy of self-deception which regarded the protestations as the reality and the action as some sort of inexplicable momentary aberration. Quam deus vult perdere, prius dementat!

The Poles were only one among many to be taken in by this facade. And they perhaps have the excuse that they were made the objects of a particular campaign by the Nazis, both German and Danzig. As early as July 3, 1933, the Danzig Nazi campaign commenced with a visit of Rauschning and Greiser to Warsaw. Talks were commenced on a number of problems, always with the apparent view of establishing more friendly relations. The main issues were the rights and interests of the Polish nationals in Danzig, the utilization of the port of Danzig, the problems arising out of the administration of Customs, and the settlement of the terms of a new convention to replace the expiring Warsaw Agreement of October 24, 1921.

Negotiations, assisted by the High Commissioner, Rosting, resulted in the conclusion of agreements on August 5 and September 18, 1933. In the agreement of August 5, the Polish Government gave assurances that no decrease in sea-borne traffic passing through Danzig would occur. Furthermore, traffic was to be divided equally between the Free City and Gdynia, taking into consideration the quality and the quantity of the goods. Points of detail were to be arranged by further negotiations, and on September 18, a protocol, providing the specified quantities of goods to be shipped through the port for the year 1934 was signed. Roughly, Danzig was to handle 45% of Poland's sea-borne exports and imports, while Gdynia

was to handle the balance. Steps were taken to adjust the costs of transshipment in the port of Danzig so that it could compete with Gdynia. The protocol was to continue in force until September 30, 1934, at which time it could be prolonged.¹²

Though a settlement of the controversy over the utilization of the port of Danzig had been made, the negotiations of August and of September, 1933 failed to remove all causes of friction between the two nations in the Polish-Danzig Customs Union. An unsettled dispute existed over import quotas and the Customs administration of the Free City. The settlement of these problems - largely technical - was not rendered easier by the Polish-German friendship. Negotiations commenced in the early part of 1934 were interrupted by reported attempts to secure the incorporation of the Danzig customs administration into that of Poland. Negotiations were resumed, however, and brought to a successful conclusion on August 6 when six agreements were signed relating to trade in foodstuffs, customs, import quotas, and veterinary regulations. Danzig agreed to take part in the Polish import quotas. There was to be established in Danzig a Chamber of Overseas Trade which would be an equal footing with the Polish Chambers of Commerce. The Polish demands for the incorporation of the Danzig Customs within the Polish was rejected.

12. Survey (1935), I, 221, The source, along with Morrow, op. cit., for the facts on this and the following page.

The agreements were considered to have been more advantageous to the Poles than to Danzig, and were regarded as proof of Germany's desire to retain her friendship with Poland. That the Nazi Government of Danzig affixed its signatures to the August 6 agreements may be attributed to the Hitler opposition to the Barthou-Litvinov project of an Eastern Locarno. Some of the Danzig officials felt that Danzig had been sacrificed to the Poles in the interests of a larger policy. That Hitler desired a settlement of these issues is no doubt true, but his attitude was correct and he insisted publicly that the essential issue was the rivalry of Gdynia and Danzig. The Völkischer Beobachter, the official Nazi newspaper, on July 14, 1934, made the following remarks:

It is in self-defence that the Danzig Government must seek for any method that will put a stop to this steady downwards course. The first method is an open and straightforward discussion with Poland of the question: 'Will you leave us the means of livelihood or will you destroy them?'¹³

Turning back to the events of August 5, 1933, an agreement as to the rights of Polish nationals was signed. Matters regarding educational facilities, the rights of Polish lawyers to practise in the Free City, and the use of the Polish language were settled to the satisfaction of the Poles. Minor matters, including the ratification of treaties to

13. Völkischer Beobachter, July 14, 1934, cited in Morrow, op. cit., 479.

which Danzig was a party, and the issuance of passports by the Polish consulates, were settled by an exchange of notes.

After the conclusion of the economic agreements of August 6, 1934, Polish-Danzig relations remained uneventful for nearly a year, but in June, 1935, a serious financial crisis arose, principally because of the position of the Free City as a part of the former German Empire. The essential frame of the Free City's administration and constitution was probably a sound one; a separate state whose only reason for being was to serve as the chief seaport of Poland, responsible therefore to Poland who conducted her foreign relations, to the League for her administration, and bound to Poland in a Customs Union under the terms of which Danzig received 7.8% of the total collections at the port of Danzig.¹⁴

But from the beginning, Danzig had been plagued by extraneous financial difficulties. She had been charged with a proportion of the German State Debt and required to take over a certain amount of German State property. Under Articles 107 and 256 of the Versailles Treaty, she had been required to pay reparations. By 1927 she had paid the sum of £ 360,000 to the Reparations Commission.¹⁵ In addition to the maintenance of the League administration and authorities, Danzig had to pay the costs of maintaining one French and one English battalion. To these burdens and that of the exceptionally large numbers of government

14. Morrow, op. cit., 502.

15. Ibid.

and railway officials were quickly added a growing number of unemployed. The debt of Danzig grew to staggering proportions (100 million marks), and the use by the Free City of German currency did not improve her financial position in a time of German over-inflation, and an economic crisis followed in the Free City. In 1923 the League stabilized the Free City's currency by the introduction of the gulden (par value 19.4¢). The new currency proved satisfactory and eight months after Poland introduced its own currency, the zloty.

The zloty proved unstable and its fall in value had unfortunate results both for Poland and for Danzig. Polish purchasing power was diminished, and, consequently, the share of Danzig's Customs duties was correspondingly decreased. The tariff war affected Danzig adversely. Friction increased over Poland's construction of Gdynia and the subsequent trade rivalry between the two ports failed to improve relations. Despite the dismissal of superfluous officials and the introduction of a tobacco monopoly, the deficit in the Danzig budget continued, and an estimated deficit of nine million gulden was forecast for 1931.

The financial position of the Free City became worse when the Nazis gained control of the administration. An extensive programme of public works was launched. Officials who did not subscribe publicly to the Nazi philosophy were dismissed, each dismissal resulting in additional pension payments. Total economic chaos was avoided by financial aid from the Reich, in the form of subsidies which were said to have amounted to as much as thirty million Reichsmarks from their inception in June

of 1933 to their cancellation in August of 1934.¹⁶

These subsidies form an interesting aspect of the particular Nazi interest in Danzig, introduced as they were hard on the heels of the Nazi victories in both countries. At the time it was believed that their cancellation was due to the deteriorating exchange position of Germany and it is true that they were never reintroduced. But one may be permitted to wonder in the light of the peculiarities of Nazi governmental finance whether this explanation is indeed a complete one, and whether the cancellation was not perhaps also an instrument of Nazi policy just as was the introduction. Dr. Rauschning was becoming progressively more disillusioned with Nazism and progressively more difficult for the Nazis to contain within their policy. He was rapidly approaching the climax of his resignation of December of 1934 and his joining the opposition. May not the cancellation of the subsidies have been a part of an active policy of making extra difficulties for a recalcitrant Rauschning? One may be permitted at least to speculate.

Whatever the motive, the cancellation of subsidies enormously increased Danzig's financial difficulties. One month after the cancellation, in September, the Bank of Danzig increased its rate of interest from 4% to 5%, and its rate of discount from 3% to 4%.¹⁷ These difficulties were increased by a sharp increase of unemployment in the spring of 1935, and by the heavy expenses attendant upon the elections of April 7, an election in which even the prestige of Rauschning, now actively in opposition, had not been able to do more than slow down the Nazi steam

16. German subsidies were said to have amounted to as much as 30,000,000 Reichsmark from June, 1933 to August, 1934. Survey (1935), I, 224.

17. Financial News, September 22, 1934. Cited in Morrow, op. cit., 509.

roller to a less than two thirds majority insufficient to amend the Constitution. With this one reservation the Nazis were now in complete control with Greiser as President of the Senate. Almost casually on May 1 the Senate devalued the gulden.

The Times of London reported on May 2, 1935, the devaluation of the gulden to 42.37 per cent of its gold parity, an action which brought the gulden down to the level of the Polish zloty.¹⁸ Poland is said to have urged the unification of the currencies but Danzig resisted such a move on the grounds that it would result in a lower standard of living for the Danzigers. At the same time the discount rate was increased to 6%¹⁹ and decrees pertaining to price control and banking were issued. The population viewed these steps with uneasiness and rumours that a further devaluation of the gulden was contemplated caused a panic to develop. On June 1 a run on the banks developed and on the 2nd the panic spread to runs on exchange offices. In a decree of the 4th, the Senate ordered the closure of stock exchanges and banks.²⁰ The closure of the banks did not halt the panic and traders were placed in serious difficulties. On the 11th a decree was promulgated by the Senate which attempted to arrest the financial crisis by establishing conditions under which foreign

18. The Times cited in Archives, 1635B.

19. Ibid.; Morrow, op. cit., 509.

20. Gazeta Polska, cited in Archives, 1674H.

currency could be obtained.²¹ The decree brought the Danzig authorities into a conflict with the Polish Government.

The devaluation of the gulden had been taken without the authorization of the Polish Government. This aroused bitter resentment on the part of the Poles since the lowered costs in Danzig would have adverse effects on the port of Gdynia. At the beginning of the crisis in June Polish banks had supported the gulden and the Polish Government had offered to guarantee Danzig currency. The offer was rejected and the institution of foreign exchange control in Danzig on June 11 resulted in great difficulties for Polish finances. Nearly 60 million zlotys were impounded in Danzig, the transfer of customs receipts was delayed, and Polish trade through Danzig was seriously disrupted.²² Negotiations were immediately entered into by both disputants, but failed to produce any results. The Polish proposal that the zloty be made the currency of the Free City was rejected by Greiser who took the opportunity to declaim in the Diet that "the Free City of Danzig would preserve its liberty and its German character through all adversity".²³ A modification of the exchange regulations took place on July 18, 1935, but this modification was only a partial satisfaction to the Polish authorities.

The Polish reply to Danzig intransigence took the form of an order issued from Warsaw on July 18 and stipulating that all goods over and

21. Survey (1935), I, 225.

22. Morrow, op. cit., 510.

23. Gazeta Gdanska, cited in Archives, 1683D.

above those destined for use or consumption in the Free City were to be released only by the Polish Customs in Polish territory.²⁴ Soon Danzig found itself with no means to supply its own needs and without work. Rumours of a Polish desire to starve Danzig into submission were current. The Senate instructed the Danzig customs that a too eager obedience to this formal Warsaw order would not be welcome. The decrees were not enforced and tempers ran high on both sides. On August 1, Greiser, as President of the Senate, decreed that foodstuffs, medicine, and other German goods required for the consumption in the Free City were to be admitted free of duty.²⁵

The Poles, greatly indignant, chose to regard this decree as an unilateral denunciation of the customs union between Danzig and Poland and the acceptance by the Free City of a customs union with Germany.²⁶ Polish indignation was, of course, strongly reinforced by a fear that Nazi actions in Danzig would present Europe with a fait accompli. On August 3, Polish authorities closed the frontier to all classes of goods from Danzig.²⁷ This action was protested by the Danzig Senate and at the same time a mobilization order was issued to SS and SA men in the Free City.²⁸

24. Survey (1935), I, 225.

25. Gazeta Polska, cited in Archives, 1741G.

26. Survey (1935), I, 225-6.

27. Gazeta Polska, cited in Archives, 1744I.

28. Ibid.

But Polish fears proved to be unjustified at this time. There had been only local initiative behind the action taken by the Senate on August 1 which was supported neither by the Danzigers nor by Berlin. Though the Danzig Nazis left the channel of negotiations open to Poland, the Polish Government refused to make any move towards the settlement of the crisis until the customs frontier had been restored between Danzig and East Prussia. Greiser, on word from Berlin, capitulated at the end of one week and on August 9 the Free City rescinded the decree of August 1.²⁹ Thereupon Poland also conceded a point and withdrew the regulations of July 18. The German-Danzig Customs barrier underwent modification and an agreement was reached whereby Poland permitted free competition between Danzig and Gdynia. Polish imports into Danzig were to have their duties assessed in zlotys.

Further discussions on the subject of currency restrictions took place and on September 24, it was announced that an agreement on the subject had been reached. A dispatch by the Berlin correspondent of The Times stated that a protocol had been initialled which provided restrictions on dealings in Polish currency and that Danzig's currency control would not be used for discrimination against Poland.

On November 6, 1935, the prospects for closer economic co-operation between Danzig and the Polish Government were improved when Polska Agencja Telegraficzna, the official Polish news agency, reported the

29. Survey (1935), I, 226. Gazeta Polska reports the date as August 8, Archives, 1750E.

conclusion of a Polish-German trade agreement. Poland's principal exports were to be timber and dairy products. Germany was granted a large quota of automotive vehicles, parts, and other classes of merchandise.³⁰ Though it was estimated that the volume of Polish-German trade would increase 50 per cent, the agreement proved to be an illusion.³¹ After the agreement came into effect on November 20, the Polish market proved unable to absorb these German industrial products. The Germans had a great need for Polish agricultural products but because of German currency restrictions the only result of this increased export was an increase of Poland's frozen balance within Germany. This resulted in a substantial hardship for Polish exports, a not uncommon end for other parties to trade agreements with Nazi Germany.

However, by the end of the year, Polish-Danzig relations had become free from the tension which had existed since the month of June. A more cordial atmosphere appeared to have been established.

30. Cited in Archives, 1859G.

31. Survey (1935), I, 205.

CHAPTER IV

THE CORRIDOR

The Polish Corridor is a term used to describe the Polish province of Pomorze, Prussian from the time of the First Partition and assigned to Poland by the Treaty of Versailles after a careful study of the historical and ethnographical claims advanced by the Polish State. The Polish Commission had originally proposed on March 12, 1919, that the old German West Prussia, the westernmost limit of a Polish majority be made the frontier between Germany and Poland, and that Danzig should be included within Poland. These proposals underwent modification and the actuality was something considerably less than the extensive Polish claims. More than ethnographical considerations determined the settlement. One of the most important was the necessity of providing Poland with a free access to the sea. Generally speaking, the Polish claim based on ethnographical grounds was valid. By the German census of 1910 West Prussia was predominantly inhabited by Poles. Nevertheless, the Germans contended that had a plebiscite been held in the Corridor district, the results would have indicated a desire for return to Germany.

The separation of West Prussia from Germany was contained in Article 27, paragraph 7, and Article 87 of the Versailles Treaty. The territory thus ceded to Poland was made a part of the provincial government of Pomorze with its seat at Thorn.

The voivodeship of Pomorze comprised approximately 6,302 square miles divided for administrative purposes into twenty districts. The

census of 1931 revealed a population of 1,086,259, of which only 9.92 per cent were Germans.¹ Arable land and forests covered an area of 627,958 acres. Of these, 147,455 acres were in the hands of the Germans.² That is to say that the German 10% of the population of Pomorze controlled nearly 25% of the arable land of the province. Since it was predominately an agricultural province its loss to Germany deprived her of an important source of food materials.

A glance at the map of East Central Europe will reveal that the Corridor question did not originate with the interposition of a Polish frontier between Germany and East Prussia. Rather, it was the original acquisition of East Prussia by Germany which presented the problem. The separation of West Prussia from the Fatherland, to which it had been attached from the time of the First Partition, gave rise to all sorts of German arguments on all levels, strategic, economic, and purely emotional. Of these, somewhat naturally, the emotional element proved the most powerful, possibly because it was the easiest exasperated. For example, perfectly reasonable Polish customs regulations forbade passengers on through express trains (for which no visa was required) from descending from the train at Corridor stops such as Tczew or Chojnice, or even from passing anything from the window as the train was stopped in the station.

1. Smogorzewski, op. cit., 178-179.

2. Ibid., 179.

True, these regulations were only intermittently enforced and even on occasion waived by local regulation, but their very presence was a pin-prick reminder to German travellers of their humiliating loss, and a frustrating reminder that the great days of German domination, from the old Teutonic Knights down to Hindenburg and Ludendorff, were now over, and that the despised Slav was now the political master of former German territory with a substantial German population under his rule. For travel on the local trains a visa was necessary, and passengers had freedom of movement, but even here exasperation prevailed; the old German land and present German friends were visited only as a Polish act of grace.

There were many such travellers. In 1930, there were 807,958 travellers between Germany and East Prussia, of whom 299,617 travelled express, while the remaining 508,341 travelled local.³ Certainly many of these were Poles but it is reasonable to assume that by far the larger number were German, possibly half-a-million of them. One pin-prick is not much; half-a-million make a substantial political fact.

Of the half-million German travellers it also seems reasonable to assume that the vast majority were Prussians. Certainly the Corridor in German minds was not intrinsically a German problem but a Prussian one, inflated by Prussian propaganda into a German one. It was Prussians who used the Corridor question to fan into being a country-wide fire of patriotic emotion for the return of the Corridor.

3. Smogorzewski, op. cit., 188.

Despite this the Corridor question, a problem of primary importance to Prussia, remained still of secondary concern to the other states of the Reich. For the Reich itself it was a question of prestige and of protection of German culture.

The separation of East Prussia from the Fatherland led to the German claim that an important source of food supplies and a valuable area for exploitation and settlement had been lost. Inasmuch as such an argument could apply with equal validity to the cession of any German territory, this claim was not a part of the Corridor question as such. Rather it was a consequence of the German cession of the Grand Duchy of Posen to Poland. The argument, however, was still a valid one in German opinion. Before World War I Germany had derived 170,000 tons of grainstuffs, 500,000 tons of sugar, and a large quantity of beef, bacon and spirits from the ceded territories.⁴

The total German loss, in land and in souls, was a staggering one. West Prussia and Posen, 4,382,000 hectares with 3,242,000 inhabitants were ceded to Poland; East Prussia lost approximately 315,000 hectares with 166,000 inhabitants, Upper Silesia 350,000 hectares with 941,000 of its population, while Lower Silesia lost 51,000 hectares and 26,000 inhabitants.⁵ These losses to the German Reich were considerable, and

4. Temperley, op. cit., II, 212-213.

5. Morrow, op. cit., 392. Figures regarding population losses are not wholly accurate since no account is taken of the population remaining to Germany.

from the national viewpoint, could only be replaced by the acquisition of a granary elsewhere or by the intensification of agriculture in the homeland.

The loss was also a military one. Bismarck's Pomeranian grenadier was more than merely the excuse for a quip. The eastern Baltic province had been one of the most important sources of recruits for the pre-war German army, as the following pre-war statistics (translated into an index based on 100) amply evidence:⁶

East Prussia	140	Westphalia	101
Pomerania	133	Saxony	96
Posen	123	Hesse-Nassau	95
West Prussia	129	Rhineland	92
Prussia	106	Berlin	39

The figures for the N.C.O's were more remarkable: Pomerania 210; Saxony 216; and East Prussia 179. No doubt the lack of large industrial centres and the rural nature of the population made the military life attractive to Pomeranians. The following table is interesting in that it shows the share of recruitment carried out by Prussia, East Prussia, and Germany.⁷

6. Figures compiled by the Prussian Statistical Office, 1906, Grundlagen des Wirtsschafttlebens von Ostpreussen, II Teil, 11, cited in Morrow, op. cit., 393. Hereinafter cited as: Grundlagen.

7. Grundlagen, 11.

Recruitment: Prussia, East Prussia and Germany

In Communes of	Prussia	East Prussia	German Empire
up to 2,000	122	146	114
2,000-5,000	92	106	91
5,000-20,000	90	100	86
20,000-100,000	91	89	83
100,000-over	65	78	65

True, increased mechanization of the army overcame this loss to a degree, but the loss of military manpower was still a substantial one.

While the complaint is often heard that the loss of West Prussia and Posen deprived the Reich of a valuable source of human labour, the emigration of approximately 650,890 persons to Western Germany swelled the ranks of German industrial workers when production was reaching a zenith; with the subsequent decrease of industry, no influx of workers was desired by the Reich, and the labour problem only became acute after Hitler launched his programme of militarization and conquest.

The second and perhaps the most important consequence that arose out of the cession of West Prussia and Posen was the dispersal of an economic entity. Long standing commercial connections suddenly found themselves severed by a political barrier and Prussian businesses were blocked from the former easy access to their correspondents (in some cases even head offices) in Berlin. Worse yet, the Soviet revolution operated to separate

East Prussia from its Russian hinterland with a consequent dislocation to its economy. In the pre-war years, East Prussia obtained its supplies from Russian Poland and Russia. These supplies were in turn passed over to West Prussia and Posen and from here they were forwarded to Pomerania and Brandenburg. The Treaty of Versailles effected a revolution in an economic situation that had existed for centuries in Eastern Europe. Russia, as well as Germany, had been deprived of its Baltic possessions in whose place were created three sovereign states each with its own frontiers and customs. A resurrected Republic of Poland resumed its former position between Russia and Germany, and between Germany and East Prussia.

It seems easy to say that the economic injury resulting to Germany might have been reduced by the development of mutual co-operation between Poles and the Germans. The political climate was not favourable and so economic problems increased the tension.

The Corridor question bristled with military difficulties. After the signature of the Versailles Treaty, 1919, a contributor to the History of the Peace Conference of Paris had the following remarks to make regarding the German loss of West Prussia, Posen and Upper Silesia:

From the military point of view, the establishment of the Polish 'corridor' between Germany and East Prussia gives rise to strategical problems of a new order. Taking into consideration the range and power of modern artillery, it is unquestionably a fact that such a corridor is militarily indefensible except by offensive operations resulting in a great extension of the width of the corridor in the direction of one or both of its flanks.

Regarded generally, perhaps the most important strategical effect of the Polish settlement and the cession of Germany's Polish possessions is the juxtaposition of two great salients - the Polish salient of Posnania, with its network of railways radiating from Posen, and the German salient of Middle Silesia, with no less highly developed railway system radiating from Breslau. The narrowness of the latter salient constitutes a serious weakness from the military point of view.⁸

When these words were written the results of the Allenstein and Marienwerder plebiscites were unknown. The strategic value of the plebiscites can be illustrated in the following words.

The decisions to be made as to the frontier of East Prussia in the light of the plebiscites to be taken in the Allenstein and Marienwerder regions will have considerable bearing on the vulnerability of the Polish 'corridor' already referred to. The Marienwerder plebiscite will directly affect the width of the corridor and will further decide whether the latter is to include that section of the important Danzig-Mlava railway which lies between Marienburg and Deutsch Eylau. Should the whole of this plebiscite area be assigned to East Prussia, the latter will extend westwards to the right bank of the Vistula.

The result of the plebiscite in the Regierungsbezirk of Allenstein will very greatly influence the possibility of defending the Polish corridor by widening it in an easterly direction. Should this region ultimately be assigned to Poland, her northern frontier would be within fifty miles of Königsberg (instead of twice that distance), while the (militarily speaking) difficult terrain of the Masurian Lake district would be situated behind the Polish frontier instead of immediately before it. Further, the attribution of Allenstein to Poland would give her excellent lateral railway facilities parallel to her northern frontier, which are otherwise lacking.⁹

8. Temperley, op. cit., II, 210.

9. Ibid., 210-211.

The two plebiscites were in favour of Germany; thereby, the frontier of East Prussia became almost coterminous with the Vistula's northern bank and the Polish army was confronted with the rough terrain of the Masurian Lake district. The German strategical position was thus improved. For Poland the defence of the Corridor from either frontier in the event of German aggression was an impossibility. The Corridor could only be a temporary obstruction in the way of the German armies. Temporary obstruction that it was, unsupported by natural defences, it was still an encumbrance on the defence of Germany.

In the eyes of the Poles, the Corridor did not exist in either the economic or political sense. To them the very name of "Corridor" was a misnomer originated by German propagandists to imply that the granting of an access to the sea for Poland was unnatural on the part of the Paris Peace Conference. To Poland the settlement appeared satisfactory. No economic or political problems arose out of the settlement except the treatment of the German minority remaining in former German territories.

To the Germans the creation of the Corridor aroused indignation and resentment. This resentment might in time have been allayed. Unfortunately, a powerful political group - the Junkers - attributed their serious economic plight after the World War to the settlement of Eastern Europe at the Paris Peace Conference. Therefore, attempts were made untiringly to secure a revision of the settlement which would not only please Germany as a whole but their own interests in particular.

It was the cries of the Junkers which caused foreign and German opinion to be diverted from the fact that agrarian indebtedness was not merely confined to East Prussia but was endemic to the whole Reich.

From the study of the Corridor problem the following conclusion may be drawn:

1. That for Poland the problem only existed in the international sense.

2. That for Germany the problem existed not only in the international but the domestic sense as well. It was at the same time both an economic and political problem. The political aspect was of greater importance than the economic.

3. That from the German viewpoint, the crux of the Corridor problem was the isolation of East Prussia from the Reich. This isolation not only offended German pride but inflicted considerable hardships on the East Prussian economy. Moreover, this economic injury was further aggravated by East Prussia's separation from its Russian hinterland.

4. That the German argument which held East Prussian agrarian indebtedness and distress to have been caused by the erection of the Polish Corridor was not supported by facts. Indebtedness was present prior to the establishment of the Corridor.

Thus, the Corridor's importance in German political life was interwoven with the sufferings of the Junkers. By focusing German attention upon East Prussia, the Junkers hoped to rescue themselves from their economic plight, and in this direction, Field Marshal von Hindenburg,

himself an East Prussian Junker, exerted considerable influence. The isolation of East Prussia and its historical relation with Germany enabled the Junkers to cast blame upon the peace settlement of Versailles as a primary source of their difficulties. But this was not the real cause. National sentiment and class interest gave this particular Ostmark an importance it did not deserve.

5. Finally, that the Corridor, by its very existence, did provide Poland with a certain military advantage vis-à-vis Germany, and did provide an annoying temporary obstacle to German defence . . . and attack.¹⁰

The Corridor problem was easily the most serious and the most deeply involved problem in the whole field of Polish-German relations. It was also the last to be resolved (apparently resolved might be a better expression) as a result of the new orientation of the Non-Aggression Pact. Dr. Schacht's economic jackboot had been applied to Poland as to so many other countries, Poland threatened retaliation, and Goering capitulated. The ease of the Polish victory should have raised suspicions in the Polish leaders, but that is another question.

It was on January 30, 1936, that an official communiqué issued by the Polish Minister of Communication notified the German authorities of the possible curtailing, beginning February 7, of transit traffic across Polish territory.¹¹ German indebtedness to the Polish State Railways then amounted to more than 58,500,000 zlotys, and was increasing at

10. Morrow, op. cit., 418

11. Polska Agencja Telegraficzna, cited in Archives, 1970D.

the rate of 6,890,000 zlotys per month.¹² Since March, 1935, these sums had been collected by the German railway administration and deposited in Dr. Schacht's Reichsbank. Here they were frozen and the Polish Government in view of its own financial position could not permit the debt to accumulate indefinitely. The quarrel was not over the debt, but over the mode of payment. It was, in fact, Schacht's old tactic of trying to force goods down other countries' throats. The German Government wished to turn over a small amount of cash and the balance in commodities. Warsaw insisted that the cash payment be at least 50% of the debt.

On February 7 the Polish Government lived up to its threat and ordered German passenger traffic through the Corridor curtailed by 40 percent.¹³

The Germans accepted the Polish decision, and almost half the cross-Corridor trains were halted. The Polish Government, having made its stand, was anxious that no further unfavourable political reactions against its action should result. The Germans were complaisant and the German press handled the news with 'inspired' restraint. As an antidote to the Franco-Russian Pact, Polish-German interests were still to be governed by the ten-year pact signed in Berlin. Moreover, there still existed in

12. Polska Agencja Telegraficzna, cited in Archives, 1970D.

13. Frederick A. Ogg, "Polish-German Friendship", Current History XLIV, (New York, 1936), 93.

political circles the talk of a German-Polish Alliance to seize the Ukraine.

In these circumstances, the dispute over the Corridor debt was not pushed to an extreme by either the Poles or the Germans. Goering during one of his hunting trips to Poland met Colonel Beck on February 23 and gave him assurances that the misunderstanding would be settled in a manner satisfactory to Poland.¹⁴

But negotiations were long and the settlement was slow in coming. Germany re-submitted her proposal to pay in merchandise, while the Polish Government refused to accept any settlement not providing a substantial payment in cash. The Reichsbank refused to release foreign exchange, even to meet the current charges. Different Polish organizations passed resolutions urging the Polish Government to confiscate German property in Polish Upper Silesia.¹⁵ The Poles resisted the temptation and finally, on April 7, 1936, an agreement was reached whereby the German Government was to transfer monthly the sum due on the previous month's operation of the railways.¹⁶ On May 7, 1936, the Bank of Poland received a payment in zlotys covering dues from March 25 to the end of April.¹⁷ On May 10

14. Ogg, loc. cit., 93.

15. Gazeta Polska, cited in Archives, 2035D.

16. Survey, (1935), I, 209.

17. Ibid.

a further agreement was concluded whereby transit traffic was to be concentrated on two lines which went through the narrowest point of the Corridor.¹⁸ The final settlement of the question came on August 31 with two agreements signed in Berlin.¹⁹ One provided for the continuance of the provisional monthly payments on the current account covering the costs of the transit service as reorganized. The second agreement liquidated the German transit debt by writing part of it off against German claims upon Poles who had secured German property in Polish Upper Silesia, and the balance, amounting to about a third, was paid in kind, no doubt to the partial satisfaction of Dr. Schacht.

18. Survey (1936), I, 396.

19. Ibid.

CHAPTER V

THE LEAGUE ABANDONS DANZIG TO THE NAZIS

Throughout 1935 and 1936 tensions in Danzig between Nazis and the Opposition were extended to the Council of the League, and ultimately in 1936 Danzig affairs were made the subject of a full scale investigation and debate. The result was the abandonment, in all but name, of the League's authority over Danzig, the almost more than tacit recognition of Nazi control over the Free City and the resignation in October, 1936 of the honorable and competent League High Commissioner, Sean Lester, and his replacement by a Professor, Dr. Karl Burckhardt who regarded the chief mission of his office to be the very abolition of its authority and who regarded an interview with Hitler as "the greatest experience of his life".¹ From the point of view of this thesis the principal item of interest in this melancholy story is that Colonel Beck adopted throughout these debates the curious and -- from the Polish point of view -- entirely inexplicable position of a willing collaborator in the funeral rites of democratic Danzig. It may be urged that such conduct was entirely within the frame of the apparently complete alliance of which the Non-Aggression Pact of 1934 was a reflection. But this is surely

1. His Majesty's Stationery Office, Documents on German Foreign Policy 1914-1945 (London, 1953), Series 'D', V, Doc. No. 5, 6. Herein-after cited as Documents on German Foreign Policy.

only the most partial of explanations, even though Beck remained throughout a careful champion of the Polish minority in Danzig.

Early in 1935 the Council began to receive petitions from all the organizations victimized by Nazi pressure. Catholics, Jews, newspaper proprietors, these were only the most prominent. But while the Council condemned the actions taken against the minorities, it appeared to be helpless to re-establish constitutional rights in the Free City. Despite assurances from Grieser that the Senate would comply with the League's requests, nothing was done. Newspaper suppression went on, the minorities continued to be violated. Sean Lester, the extremely capable High Commissioner was made the object of oratorical abuse and the League's prestige continued to decline.

In 1936 the Council became more deeply involved in the Danzig issue. Through all of this Greiser showed an air of increasing hostility and became more and more intransigent. To the Nazis the League represented a burden; Greiser maintained that the Supreme Court of Danzig possessed the necessary authority to decide what was legal or illegal in the Free City and his administration ignored both the Committee of Jurists and the High Commissioner.²

In all this he was supported by Beck. The Polish Foreign Minister seemed to regard it as his function to attempt to reconcile the various opposition factions towards the philosophy and actions expressed by the

2. Hans L. Leonhardt, Nazi Conquest of Danzig (Chicago, 1942), 201.

Nazi Party. No doubt what happened to the opposition was of no concern so long as Polish minority rights were maintained. He felt, he said, that "a certain freedom of action . . . was essential to the Senate . . . to enable it to administer public affairs satisfactorily, and the safeguarding of the legitimate interests and rights of the Danzig population guaranteed by the Constitution".³ What "a certain freedom of action" meant, was not clarified. Beck failed to realize -- or at least to admit publicly -- that the preservation of Constitutional rights in Danzig would be a safeguard for the retention of Polish rights in that territory. But again he was probably trapped in the logic of his German alliance.

In a private interview Anthony Eden, the League rapporteur for Danzig affairs threatened Greiser with the ordering of a new general election and the appointment of a commission of inquiry. But Beck seemed loathe to place pressure on the Danzig Nazis to such an extent that Polish-German friendship might sustain damage and so only the most meagre Polish co-operation in Eden's action was forthcoming. The Polish suggestion that "the Council, like a mediaeval monarch, be satisfied with a vassal's theoretical obedience and not try to translate it into definite acts"⁴ was not acceptable to Eden, who countered with a threat that Britain and France might abandon League control of Danzig entirely. Eden's threat

3. Leonhardt, op. cit., 203.

4. Quotation from Edgar Ansel Mowrer, "New Cabinet Means Ironclad French Tie with British Policy", Chicago Daily News, January 25, 1936, 2. Cited in Leonhardt, op. cit., 208.

and his further references to general Anglo-German relations took the whole affair into an area beyond the competence of Greiser, who felt himself forced to seek further instructions immediately from Berlin by long distance telephone. Hitler was at this time preoccupied with plans for the reoccupation of the Rhineland and presumably English good will was to be maintained at all reasonable cost, particularly when the international aspect of the Danzig question could be allayed as well. Greiser's instructions apparently came to him in no uncertain terms. He came away from the telephone almost indecent in his haste to accept the proffered bargain and to accede to the petitions before the Council, provided the Council postponed indefinitely its annoying project of inquiring into the validity of the Danzig elections.⁵

Soon after this, on March 7, 1936, German troops reoccupied the Rhineland, presenting a definite threat not only to France but to all other European countries, including Poland. Beck seems to have wakened momentarily from his dream of a Polish-German partnership on some plane of equality and to have seen the realities of the situation. Whatever the reason, he made a most interesting volte-face. Where, short weeks ago, he had been a willing collaborator in the Nazification of the Free City

5. Charles Graham, "La Ville Libre dangereuse", L'Europe Nouvelle, XIX (1936), 465. Cited in Leonhardt, op. cit., 208.

of Danzig, now suddenly he offered outright military collaboration to the French if they and the English were prepared to drive the Germans from the Rhineland by force. On the same day Beck informed the French Ambassador in Warsaw, Noël, that German action should be regarded by the French as a casus belli. The Polish Minister himself regarded it as a casus foederis. Polish military support was offered France if the French would take military action against the German army for the purpose of restoring the status quo ante.⁶ A most tantalizing speculation presents itself about the possible results of such emphatic and timely action if it have been taken. At the International Military Tribunal Trial of Tuesday, June 4, 1946, Major-General Jodl remarked that in 1935 Germany had 36 divisions. France, Czechoslovakia and Poland had 90 divisions and in time of war could have placed 190 divisions in the field. The Rhineland was occupied by approximately one division!⁷ But the speculation would be fruitless. The action was not taken. Poland's military aid was declined on the grounds that England would not support France in her move against the Germans, and in effect, the Western democracies by their inaction, underwrote Hitler's coup.

France's rejection of the Polish proposal to act against the Germans has been the subject of many discussions and the direction of Polish-

6. S. Harrison Thomson, "Foreign Relations", in Bernadotte E. Schmitt, Poland, (Los Angeles, 1945), 405-406. H. P. Matthews, "Poland's Foreign Relations", Fortnightly, 860 (August, 1938), 162. For French views regarding Polish military strength see below.

7. International Military Tribunal, Trial of the Major War Criminals (Nuremberg, 1948), XV, 352.

French friendship afterwards has been difficult to determine. One circle of foreign experts is of the opinion that the distance between the two nations became wider, while another contends that the Franco-Polish Alliance was in fact strengthened.⁸

It is difficult to explain French inaction, but a possible part of the explanation may lie in French doubts of the effectiveness of the Polish army. The Polish army was not mechanized and Poland's rearmament program was not far advanced. She found it necessary after the Rhineland crisis to secure financial aid from France so that an industrial zone could be established in the vicinity of Sandonierz. Even in 1939 Poland was poorly equipped, both on the ground and in the air. French doubts may have been well founded.

But the Rhineland occupation was still a month in the future when Beck visited Berlin on his return to Warsaw from Geneva. The Polish Foreign Minister was given to understand that members of the Danzig Opposition would receive less harsh treatment. Beck was a particularly honored guest in Nazi government circles since he was considered as having prevented the April elections from being declared invalid, as having blocked the appointment of an investigation committee "both of which might have unhorsed the National Socialists in Danzig".⁹ Warsaw was pleased

8. Matthews, loc. cit., 168.

9. New York Times, January 26, p. 24; also Robert Machray, The Poland of Pilsudski (London, 1936), 438-439. Both cited in Leonhardt, op. cit., 209.

with Beck's actions as well. He was regarded as having brought about a settlement of the conflict between the Free City and the League. In the remainder of Poland the desirability of the Geneva settlement received divided opinions. The Gazeta codzienna remarked:

The Danzig Nazis [as contrasted with the German Nazis] do not deserve to enjoy Polish confidence

If you allow the Nazi Senate to violate the Constitution in regard to its fellow-citizens and make the Free City another Nazi totalitarian State, you will encourage it to bring^{to} fulfilment a desire that is now only a party slogan - "Back to the Reich" - which is displayed daily on the front page of the Nazis' party newspaper in Danzig.¹⁰

Berlin, of course, interpreted the Geneva compromise as authority to carry out the Gleichschaltung without serious hinderance. Though a brief period of peace and quiet followed, events were to prove by the beginning of June that there had been no modification of the Nazi policy in the Free City.

On June 17 and for the following three days, Papée, the Polish diplomatic representative in the Free City, protested against the assaults on Polish-speaking citizens. Assurances were given on June 22 by the Senate that compensation would be paid to the Poles who had suffered injury during the disturbances. Other minority groups were less fortunate. But then the Nazis could afford to be tolerant with the Poles. They had won overwhelmingly their battle against the League.¹¹

10. Translated from New York Times, January 26. Cited in Leonhardt, op. cit., 209.

11. Survey (1936), 545.

The new freedom from effective League control was soon emphasized on June 25, 1936, by a typical Nazi insult to the High Commissioner. The German cruiser "Leipzig" arrived in Danzig harbour on that date. Protocol called for the German officers to call upon the High Commissioner and pay their respects but on this occasion this usage was deliberately violated. It was expected that Beck would not take part in the festivities connected with such an insult. He outdid the Nazis by attending. Some Polish sources have attempted to explain the "Leipzig" incident as a demonstration against the League because on a previous occasion representatives of the Opposition had been present, obvious face savings for Beck's co-operation in this Nazi expression of contempt for everything that the League represented.

Lester, the High Commissioner, reported the incident to the Council. Eden who was both President of the League Council as well as the rapporteur on Danzig supported Lester by requesting Poland to handle the "Leipzig" incident through normal diplomatic channels and to report on the results at the next session of the Council. Beck declared that Poland would study and report on the question. Gazeta Polska prophesied that "the demonstration would be considered purely personal"; this Polish attitude plus smooth words on the part of Beck and Eden buried the incident.¹²

On July 4, Greiser in a speech before the League Council, a speech

12. Bulletin of International News, XIII (1936-37), 65. Cited in Leonhardt, op. cit., 236.

characterized by "stupid schoolboy vulgarity", attacked the system of League control and suggested the removal of the High Commissioner's Office and of League of Nations control. To appease the Poles he promised that "all rights enjoyed by the Polish minority in the territory of the Free City of Danzig in virtue of treaties and agreements, all the rights of the Polish State, would be respected".¹³

Greiser's tour de force of vulgarity and impudence caused perturbation in Geneva and in Warsaw. Poland was concerned that the far-reaching changes proposed by Greiser would prove dangerous, for any concessions granted to Danzigers of necessity diminished the rights of the Poles. But a middle ground was taken. Though the Polish Government showed no opposition towards the modifications of the Constitution, it demanded that Polish interests should be fully protected. Should the League's supervisory powers in Danzig diminish, Poland intended to demand additional rights and privileges. This point of view was expressed by Beck to Greiser on July 4, and a further exchange of views between Papée and Greiser took place on the 8th. Similar ideas were expressed by Lipski to the German Foreign Minister in Berlin on the 8th and the 9th.¹⁴ No concessions were made either in Danzig or in Berlin, despite the depth of Polish feeling in the matter. Throughout Poland the citizens demanded that the Polish Government secure adequate protection for its interests

13. Survey (1936), 550.

14. Ibid., 554.

in Danzig. A huge demonstration organized by the Polish Maritime and Colonial League took place in Warsaw on July 17 as a protest against Nazi activity at Danzig. Demands were made for the maintenance of Polish rights in the port. Other demonstrations took place in various towns throughout the country.¹⁵ A formal protest against such activity was presented on July 22, 1936 by Greiser to Papée, who assured the Nazi representative that the maintenance of good relations between Poland and the Free City would in no way be affected by the demonstrations.¹⁶

It is not surprising that after Greiser's outburst at Geneva on July 4, the Polish Government took further steps towards reanimating the Franco-Polish Alliance which had lapsed, in any effective sense, after the conclusion of the German-Polish Agreement of 1934. The Polish refusal to become a part of the Eastern Locarno project had made for a coolness on the part of France, a coolness matched by Polish resentment at the Franco-Soviet Pact of Mutual Assistance signed on May 2, 1935, and the interlocking Soviet-Czechoslovak Treaty.¹⁷ The Poles felt that both pacts were aimed at their military security.

Now that the German demands were voiced for Danzig's freedom from League control and its incorporation into the Reich, Poland turned to both France and Czechoslovakia for possible assistance in a possible war with

15. Survey (1936), 550.

16. Ibid.

17. Thomson, loc. cit., 406.

Germany.

On August 12, 1936, in an interview with Hitler, Count Szembek raised the question of the future of Polish-Danzig relations, and asked what guarantees the German Government was prepared to make in the event of the overthrow of the Danzig Constitution and League of Nations control. The Chancellor replied that:

The National-Socialist régime would act in Danzig entirely by way of an understanding with Poland and respect for all her rights in the Free City Polish rights in the Free City, . . . , could not suffer the least detriment. The present statutory position need not be violated.¹⁸

The Chancellor explained that the Danzig question was "negligible" in comparison to the problems which had necessitated the harmonizing of German and Polish policy.¹⁹

Since the Poles were prepared to bargain away the international status of Danzig, the Germans completed the Nazification of the Free City with their connivance.

On August 14 Szembek was received by Ribbentrop who repeated the assurance that "nobody wanted to violate the Statute of the Free City or the position of the League of Nations in Danzig". Then he enlarged on the necessity for Polish-German co-operation:

Both Poland and Germany were faced with a serious danger arising from the fact that the Soviets had not renounced the conception of world revolution. Moscow could not renounce this conception, and Stalin was bound to carry

18. The Polish White Book, Doc. No. 24, 33.

19. Ibid., 32.

on a corresponding policy, otherwise there would be a breakdown of the whole Bolshevik system, which aimed at levelling down and destroying all the achievements of Western civilization and culture. Chancellor Hitler [would] not make any compromise in relation to Russia, because the slightest deviation from his own present policy must open the way for the reign of Bolshevism in Germany.²⁰

The autumn of 1936 saw the name of Danzig appear twice on the League Council's agenda. On September 18 the discussion centered about the "Leipzig" affair while the internal situation became the subject of examination on October 5.

It will be recalled that the Council with Eden as rapporteur had requested Poland to handle the "Leipzig" incident through normal diplomatic channels and submit a report of such at the next session. The mandate was discharged by an exchange of notes with the German Foreign Office. On July 24 Lipski asked von Neurath, the German Foreign Minister, to give him "such information regarding the attitude of the Government of the Reich in this matter as would enable the Polish Government to fulfil the mandate entrusted to it."²¹ The Polish Note is significant in its lack of protest and demand of an explanation; moreover, no suggestion is contained that the Reich abstain in the future from similar demonstrations. The German reply to the request was as follows:

20. The Polish White Book, Doc. No. 25, 33.

21. A letter, dated September 22, 1936, from Beck to the Secretary-General of the League (L.N.O.J., XVII [1936] Part II, 1334). Cited in Leonhardt, op. cit., 260.

Having regard to the well-known incidents which took place at the reception given at the end of August last year by Mr. Lester, High Commissioner of the League of Nations, in honor of the officers of the German battleship Admiral Scheer, the German Government did not wish to expose the German officers to a repetition of such annoyance and therefore instructed the commander of the Leipzig not to pay a visit to Mr. Lester. There was thus no intention of acting contrary to the Statute of the Free City or against the rights of Poland.²²

The German Government's explanation was identical to that of Forster, and its prompt acceptance by the Polish Government did nothing to enhance the reputation of the League High Commissioner vis-à-vis the Nazis. This action was taken in the face of a Polish assurance of full confidence in Lester only three weeks earlier.²³

Eden, reporting to the Council on September 25, expressed full confidence in the League High Commissioner and lively appreciation of the efforts of the Polish Government to bring about a settlement of the incident.²⁴

The internal situation of the Free City had been subject of several discussions by the Committee of Three. At this time the Constitution was subject to constant violations, and the last vestiges of freedom were slowly disappearing. Lester drew attention to this in his report of

22. Survey (1936), 555.

23. Ibid.

24. "Minutes of the Ninety-third Session of the Council, Third Meeting, September 25, 1936". (Ibid., 1166). Cited in Leonhardt, op. cit., 261.

September 12, and included in it an historical resume whose direction clearly indicated that he would continue his duties only if the Council reverted to a different course of action.²⁵

A report and draft resolution concerning the internal situation of the Free City was submitted to the Council on October 5. Since Eden had left for Geneva one day before the report was made to the Council, the task was left to Lord Cranborne, his alter ego. The English delegate reported that

the Council and the High Commissioner are at the present time meeting with systematic obstruction from the Senate in carrying out the functions accepted by the Council of guaranteeing the Constitution of the Free City.²⁶

While underlining the gravity of the situation, Cranborne spoke of the conviction of the Committee of Three that "the Council [could] count upon the full assistance of the Polish Government in dealing with the situation".²⁷

A draft resolution was adopted and in substance asked

the Polish Government to seek, on behalf of the Council, the means of putting an end to the situation described in the general report of the High Commissioner and thus of rendering fully effective the guarantee of the League of Nations, and to make a report on this subject at its next session²⁸

The Polish delegate, Kormanicki, accepted the draft resolution and remarked that Poland hoped for the co-operation of the Senate in the settle-

25. Documents (1936), 444.

26. Ibid., 445.

27. Ibid.

28. Ibid., 446.

ment of the unsatisfactory situation existent in Danzig.

The Nazis recognized that they had won another victory against the League and their rejoicing was increased over the transferring of Mr. Lester to the position of Deputy Secretary-General of the League. This decision was reached by the Committee of Three (United Kingdom, France, Sweden), and was accepted by the League Council. Lester continued to remain as High Commissioner until January, 1937, but from October, 1936, to January, 1937, he played the part of the forgotten man. His relations with the Opposition were severed and he was ignored by the Senate.

After Lester's resignation the Nazis plunged the Free City into a wave of terrorism. On October 14, 1936, the Danzig Social Democratic Party was dissolved; according to the President of the Free City, the Social Democrats conspired to launch an attack against the State.²⁹ This action was followed by the dissolution of the Union of German Railway and Harbour Employees.³⁰

Oppressive measures were not confined to the Social Democratic Party. Comments of the Nazi press indicated that the days of the German Nationalist and Centre Parties were numbered. The head of the German Nationalist Party, Weise, left Danzig in the early part of October to avoid arrest. His successor, Dr. Blavier, was sentenced to three months'

29. Gazeta Gdanska, cited in Archives, 2296C.

30. Daily Herald, cited in Archives, 2309E.

imprisonment ten days later. About the middle of October disturbances occurred at a meeting of the Centre Party, although no leaders were arrested. On December 2, a member of the Centre Party was one of the five deputies whose immunity was suspended by the Volkstag so that they could stand trial for subversive activities.³¹ During the last week of December a number of the most prominent members of that party were arrested. At the same time Forster stated that the objective of the Nazis for 1937 was the total annihilation of the Centre Party. These measures against the Opposition do not appear to have been made the object of any formal representations by the Polish Government. Polish acquiescence in the Nazi campaign sufficed to smooth in some measure negotiations which the Polish Government undertook on the behalf of the Polish minority. After a preliminary interview with Greiser on October 6, Papée came to Warsaw for a discussion of methods of settling the difficulties in the Free City.³² By this time the Polish Government showed concern at the many reports of anti-Polish activities which were reaching Warsaw. The hampering of Polish business enterprises, the dissolution of a Polish professional organization, and the destruction of Polish monuments led the Polish Commissioner-General to submit to the Danzig Senate on October 25 a memorandum concerning Polish views on these developments. The document drew attention to the complaints of the Poles and demanded additional guarantees of Polish interests in the Free City.³³ The Nazis were not prepared to meet the

31. Survey (1936), 564.

32. Ibid., 565.

33. Ibid.

Polish wishes for further guarantees and Greiser, wishing to avoid unpleasantness in the process of negotiating with the Poles, left Danzig for a vacation in a German spa. His absence for a period of six weeks delayed negotiations with the Poles and gave Forster a free hand.

The beginning of November, 1936, saw increased tension between Poland and Danzig. The Polish newspapers Kurjer Poranny, Gazeta Gdanska, Naprzod, and the Jewish newspaper, Hajutige, were banned from the Free City for five months.³⁴ Also in the first week of November, 1936, Polish Danzigers complained loudly about a decree which specified that all Labour Exchanges in the Free City were to be unified. The effect of this was to give the Nazis the power of withholding labour permits from the Poles.³⁵ Protests addressed to the Senate by Papée were met by counter-charges of an anti-German demonstration in Gdynia, the destruction of Nazi flags and emblems by Polish mobs, and of other such Polish provocations.

While the situation was deteriorating in the Free City, Beck went off to London for a formal visit. A communiqué issued after the conference stated that "Beck and Mr. Eden [were] of the opinion that international collaboration [could] best be maintained within the framework of the League of Nations, and that nothing would be more fatal to the hopes of European appeasement than the division, apparent or real, of Europe into opposing blocs".³⁶

34. Gazeta Polska, cited in Archives, 2314H.

35. Survey (1936), 566.

36. Documents (1936), 406.

By November the Polish-German entente had deteriorated to such an extent that the Polish Government inquired through diplomatic channels "whether the German Government still attached importance to the maintenance of good relations with Poland".³⁷ On November 18 Beck spoke to the German Ambassador in Warsaw. Both White Books have recorded the interview. In the German Minute Moltke expostulated with Beck about Polish provocations to good German relations. The German Ambassador drew attention to the polemics in the Polish press, to the treatment of the German minority at Graudenz, Bromberg, and to the tendency of Poland to arrogate to herself new rights in Danzig. Moreover, he said, "if this kind of procedure continued, there would be serious results; the relations between Germany and Poland would inevitably be disturbed".³⁸

In Beck's Minute of the conversation, the German Ambassador remarked that "the Chancellor had authorized him to declare most positively that the principles and factors which had led to the Polish-German understanding still held their full meaning and value". "The Chancellor", said Moltke, "thought that . . . if the High Commissioner adopted a more judicious attitude to his mission, a quite tolerable and lasting modus vivendi could exist".³⁹

Expressing his thanks for this declaration, the Polish Foreign Minister turned to the League mandate entrusted to Poland. Remarking that

37. Documents (1936), 419.

38. The German White Book, Doc. No. 68, 84.

39. The Polish White Book, Doc. No. 26, 34.

he had undertaken "the perhaps thankless mission of investigating the Danzig question on the basis of the League Mandate", Beck thought "that the Polish Government, which was not influenced by doctrines and had no desire to create difficulties, could find a solution. A cardinal condition was the goodwill of the Senate, which would have to contribute their share to the success of this mission".⁴⁰

Further in the conversation, Beck detected nervousness on Moltke's part lest Poland exploit the situation and extend her rights at the expense of the Senate, an action which could create numerous difficulties for Polish-German understanding. Since the Senate had prejudged certain matters to its own advantage, Polish interests demanded new guarantees.

Judging the conversation as a whole, I had reason to believe that pressure would certainly be brought to bear on Danzig from the German side, provided that we did not place them in a too difficult position by putting forward demands either compromising the activities of the Nazi Senate or extending, not the practical, but the theoretical Treaty Rights of Poland.⁴¹

The Polish representations brought about a temporary easing of the situation in Danzig. At the time, the German Reich wished to avoid a premature break with Poland. On November 24, the Danzig Senate replied to the Polish memorandum of October 24 and promised the commencement of conversations between Danzig and Poland as soon as Greiser had returned to the Free City. The Note stipulated that negotiations must lead to the

40. The Polish White Book, Doc. No. 26, 35.

41. Ibid.

improvement of Danzig-League relations, but that no proposals having as their purpose the extension of Polish rights in Danzig would be discussed by the Senate.⁴²

The problems of Danzig were the subject of discussion between Moltke and Marshal Smigly-Rydz at Warsaw on November 25. The marshal expressed his regret over the unfavorable press comments during the past months but believed that a settlement regarding the situation in Danzig could be reached without difficulty and ended by requesting Moltke to convey to the "Fuehrer and Chancellor" his assurances that the foreign policy laid down by the late Marshal Pilsudski would be continued.⁴³

Negotiations between Papée and Greiser were commenced on December 9 and continued until "positive" results were achieved on January 10, 1937. The results of the negotiations were not made public but Poland failed to receive the additional guarantees that she had demanded. Rather she had to accept the German assurances that "the territorial status of the Free City would be respected"⁴⁴ Unpleasant as it was all this was nevertheless embodied in a Polish report addressed to the Committee of Three and submitted in the month of January, 1937.⁴⁵

42. Gazeta Polska, cited in Archives, 2347F.

43. The German White Book, Doc. No. 69, 85.

44. Survey (1936), 567.

45. Ibid., 570.

Before submitting his report, Beck consulted with the Committee of Three but before this even he consulted with Berlin. On his way to the Geneva meeting, scheduled for January 21, 1937, Beck went via Berlin for an interview with von Neurath at which the latter expressed satisfaction over the provisional arrangement between Danzig and Poland.⁴⁶ Arrived at Geneva, Beck found the Committee of Three reluctant to approve his proposed solution. Contemporary press speculation had it that Delbos and Eden wished to abolish the High Commissioner's office, because of its ineffectiveness, but that they yielded to Beck's argument that Polish interests could be protected only by the presence in Danzig of a League High Commissioner.⁴⁷ Discussions between the Committee of Three and Beck continued for five days from January 21 to January 27 principally in and around the problem of defining the functions of the High Commissioner in such a way that they would be acceptable both to the Senate and to Mr. Lester's successor. Greiser was called into the consultations and finally a formula was arrived at, ^{and} accepted by the Committee of Three with reluctance and hesitation. This done, Beck completed his report which, along with that from the Committee of Three about these recent discussions, was laid before the Council on January 27, 1937.⁴⁸

The Polish Government's report declared that the Council's instructions

46. Survey (1936), 568.

47. Ibid.

48. Ibid.

had been carried out in an impartial manner despite the difficulties of the political situation. During the course of negotiations with the Danzig Senate, the Polish Government had emphasized the need for respecting the competence of the High Commissioner and the Statute of the Free City. The Senate had given assurances that the Free City would base its relations with the High Commissioner on a legal basis and that it would carry out the obligations of the Statute. The assurances by the Danzig representatives "led the Polish Government to hope that the difficulties experienced by the High Commissioner in the exercise of his functions [would] not arise in future". After this profusion of "hopeless hopefulness", Beck expressed the opinion that

from a practical standpoint, the High Commissioner, in the performance of his duties laid down in the Statute, should take care to see that the internal administration of the Free City is not hampered. This should be the less difficult for him if it is borne in mind that a differentiation between the sources of information on which the High Commissioner bases his action is not only possible but even desirable. In this connection, the information furnished by the Senate should be given the place corresponding to the latter's authority as the Government of the Free City of Danzig.⁴⁹

Eden expressed his "gratitude to the Polish Government for the action it had taken" and his appreciation for the "zeal" which the eminent representative, Beck, had shown during the course of the negotiations. He went on to analyze the Statute of the Free City which, he said, consisted

⁴⁹. L.N.O.J., XVIII (1937), Part I, 242. Cited in Leonhardt, op. cit., 281.

of three elements: maintenance of the international position of the Free City; provision for the adjustment of difficulties between Danzig and Poland; and the guarantee of the Constitution. As to the last, Eden thought that the guarantee had no connection with the functions of the League but, the League having given it, the League was bound to fulfil it. How was the League to fulfil its guarantee? By the non-interference either of the High Commissioner or of the League Council in the affairs of Danzig. In his exposition, Eden resorted to ambiguity and multiple interpretations so that the entire affair became one of total confusion.

The Committee considers that the principles laid down in the report from our Polish colleague are to be understood in the sense that the High Commissioner's right to ask for information from the Senate and the Senate's duty to furnish the information asked for, remain unquestioned. It is for the High Commissioner to decide, on the basis of whatsoever information may be available to him, as to the questions, if any, in regard to which he will ask for explanations from the Senate, and thereafter to decide himself whether or not it is advisable for him to make a report to the Council.⁵⁰

The affirmation that the High Commissioner was free to obtain information from all possible sources was qualified by the recommendation that the terms of the Polish report were to be taken into consideration. Moreover, no suggestions were contained in the report that the Senate should change existing legislation so that the High Commissioner could obtain information from other official sources.

50. Survey (1936), 570.

Eden's conduct in the Danzig affair is very suspect. As an astute statesman he must have foreseen the final subjugation of the Free City by the Reich. If this is so then one must label Eden guilty of acquiescence in German submission. Hans L. Leonhardt, whom we have been following for so much of this Danzig story, severely criticizes Eden when he points out that

. . . the Council, under Mr. Eden's guidance, at no time annulled a single case of suspension of newspapers, of suppression of parties, or of any other unconstitutional transgression. As far as the Danzig affair is concerned, Mr. Eden's conduct in his capacity as rapporteur, it must be said, scarcely measured up to his grave responsibilities, either as the foreign secretary of a great and law-respecting empire or as the appointed trustee of the Council of the League of Nations.⁵¹

After the report was adopted without any discussion on the part of the members of the Council, a pathetic comedy of congratulations began. Lester thanked Eden, Eden thanked Lester, and Greiser thanked both Eden and Beck (but not Lester). The President of the Senate acknowledged with pleasure the "fairness and tact" of Beck and spoke of "a further tangible contribution to European peace". He hoped that "the tension would be finally brought to an end" and declared that "the satisfactory principles on which the report was based would undoubtedly enable him to co-operate whole-heartedly with the new High Commissioner to be appointed by the League".⁵²

51. Leonhardt, op. cit., 286.

52. Ibid., 287.

The next step taken by the Council was the appointment of a new High Commissioner to replace Mr. Lester. On January 27 the Council was told that the post had been offered to Admiral de Graaf, who had declined, but that Professor Dr. Karl Burckhardt of Switzerland had accepted. He took up his duties as High Commissioner on March 1, 1937, under instructions from Eden to avoid disputes with the Reich as far as possible.⁵³

At a reception given in his honour by the Polish President, Mościcki, Burckhardt was told that relations between Germany and Poland had become normalized since the National-Socialist Government came to power in the Reich.⁵⁴ Proceeding to Cannes, Burckhardt had an interview with Beck who suggested that he handle Danzig affairs tactfully and avoid disputes.⁵⁵

Under these circumstances, the Nazis were able to continue unimpeded their campaign of Gleichschaltung. The Danzig Opposition was slowly removed from the political scene, and a decree of February 9 served as an instrument for further removal of "undesirable" individuals. Gradually, the process of "purification" was advanced so far that the Enabling Act, a "Law of Full Powers" was easily prolonged for another four years.⁵⁶ During the autumn months the progressive Nazification of Danzig went on

53. "Report of M. Carl Burckhardt, Geneva, March 19, 1940, "Series of League of Nations Publications, Vol. VII: Political, 1940, VII, I, Official No.: C42.M.38. 1940. VII, pp. 2-3. Subsequently cited as Report Burckhardt. Cited in Leonhardt, op. cit., 309. Burckhardt is himself evidence of these instructions. Leonhardt, op. cit., 309, note 13.

54. Report Burckhardt, 3. Cited in Leonhardt, op. cit., 309.

55. Ibid., cited in Leonhardt, op. cit., 309.

56. Survey (1936), 573.

apace. By a decree of November 8, the formation of political parties was forbidden: a single youth organization, the Staats Jugend (and one can imagine its spirit) put an end to the Catholic youth groups; and the Jews were subjected to increased anti-Semitic propaganda.⁵⁷

The Polish attitude towards this Nazification of Danzig was one of indifference. During the whole year, Poland intervened only twice. The first instance was in August, 1937, when Nazi authorities compelled a number of children to attend German schools and arrested parents who opposed this action. The Germans, explaining their action, contended that the parents were German employees of the Polish State Railways and that their children had been forced to attend Polish schools by the railway authority. The other instance of Polish intervention occurred over the arrest of several members of the Polish postal service in Danzig for distributing forbidden newspapers in Danzig. The two incidents were settled almost casually through normal diplomatic channels.⁵⁸

57. Survey (1937), I, 401.

58. Ibid., 402.

CHAPTER VI

THE 1934 SPIRIT STILL ACTIVE: 1937-8 THROUGH MUNICH

In 1937, outside the affairs of Danzig, Poland was a little more occupied than usual with the problem of minorities. Since her involuntary adherence to the Minorities Treaty of 1919, she had experienced many difficulties with the German minorities. German complaints were many, and a large number came from Upper Silesia. Complaints about alleged robberies of German nationals, arbitrary arrests, ill-treatment, forceful enlistment in the Polish army, continual interference with the operation of German language schools; these and a hundred and one other complaints, whether real or fictional, or both, continued to plague the relations between the two countries.¹ Similarly, the Polish minority under German domination voiced complaints regarding the lack of schools, both primary and secondary;² the frequent difficulty experienced in securing land in Upper Silesia,³ the necessity of becoming a member of the "Labour Front" to secure work,⁴ the inability to vote in local or municipal

1. The German White Book, Doc. No. 5, 7.

2. Survey (1932), 347.

3. Ibid., 350.

4. Survey (1937), I, 395.

elections,⁵ and the mass campaigns which had as their objective the forced joining of Polish youth in such organizations as the Hitlerjugend.⁶

With the advent of Hitler to power, and the conclusion of the Non-Aggression Pact of 1934, Poland decided to test the friendship of Germany. Since the Minorities Treaty had appeared to be a "one-sided burden" for Poland, on September 13, 1934, Beck before the League Assembly stated that "Poland would, in the future, refuse all co-operation which would assist international bodies in supervising her execution of the provisions for the protection of minorities."⁷ The Polish denunciation met objections from both Great Britain and France and came as a surprise to Germany,⁸ who nevertheless supported the move.

The Reich showed considerable alarm over the Polish action for "the

5. Survey (1937), I, 396.

6. The Polish White Book, Doc. No. 93, 104.

7. The German White Book, Doc. No. 49, 65. Perhaps the German support of Beck's Denunciation was made the reason since the Geneva Convention of 1922 [between Poland and Germany regarding Upper Silesia] was not included in Beck's denunciation of the Minorities Treaty of 1919. The Upper Silesian Mixed Commission and Arbitral Tribunal continued to function. In both cases, the President was appointed by the League of Nations. Hence, Beck's action can be interpreted as the establishment of a bilateral agreement with Germany over the matter of Upper Silesia.

8. Ibid.

servitude imposed in 1919 upon the territories ceded by the Reich to Poland [could] be done away with, and the whole status of eastern frontier questions [become] materially aggravated to Germany's disadvantage".⁹

To dispell the German alarm, Beck assured von Moltke on November 19, 1934, that "the rights of the minority would continue to be protected by the Polish Constitution".¹⁰

Whether or not the Germans placed much faith in this assurance is difficult to assess, but the spirit of the Non-Aggression Pact served to alleviate the irritations created by the minorities' complaints and it was not until 1937 when the Geneva Convention was to expire that the entire problem was re-opened for study.

In the early part of January, 1937, von Neurath drew to Beck's attention the forth-coming expiry of this Convention and emphasized the necessity of reaching a settlement on a number of economic and minorities questions.¹¹

The matter was further pursued, and in the absence of Beck, Count Szembek saw von Moltke on March 16, 1937. He informed the German Ambassador that a bilateral agreement for the protection of minorities was viewed with disfavour by the Polish Government, and that sufficient pro-

9. The German White Book, Doc. No. 52, 68.

10. Ibid., Doc. No. 53, 71.

11. Ibid., Doc. No. 81, 93.

tection was already supplied by the Polish Constitution.¹² The Geneva Convention, that is to say, was to go the way of the Minorities Treaty. At least so the Polish hoped.

Less than a month later the Political Department of the German foreign office revealed that negotiations on the expiry of the Geneva Agreement were proceeding slowly. On May 28, von Neurath instructed Moltke to inform Beck that if the validity of the international obligations were denied, "then an open disagreement would result between the two countries".¹³ For the future it was to be hoped that the German minority in Poland "would develop in such a way that this fundamental disagreement [would] not prejudice the relations between Germany and Poland".¹⁴

Fortunately for Poland, Polish friendship was still, apparently, sufficiently desirable to Germany for the Germans to work hard at the problem of arriving at some sort of modus vivendi in this situation. At any rate, a compromise was soon found and presented by von Moltke to Beck as a démarche on June 1, 1937.¹⁵ The German government was still of the opinion that a bilateral treaty was the only solution to the problem of minorities but, as the démarche stated, "If the Polish Government should actually

12. The German White Book, Doc. No. 83, 95.

13. Ibid., Doc. No. 87, 100.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid., Doc. No. 88, 101.

give a definite refusal to this proposal despite Germany's effort to meet Poland half-way [a minorities obligation would have been a new servitude on German sovereignty], then there is only one way of arriving at a fundamental understanding for dealing with the minorities problem: conceivably, the two governments might make separate but simultaneous declarations to the same effect, concerning the protection of German and Polish minorities living in their respective territories. Although this way has many disadvantages when compared with the method of settlement by treaty, the German Government would yet agree to it as a last resource, because the situation would thereby be clarified at least to some extent".¹⁶ The original German position had thus been substantially modified in the face of Polish intransigence.

But no change in the Polish attitude of friendly but firm refusal was shown on June 6, 1937, when Beck saw von Moltke.¹⁷ Despite this apparent lack of success, on June 24, the German Ambassador delivered to Beck a specific wording for the German-projected minorities declaration.¹⁸ At this meeting Beck proved to be more conciliatory and "expressed concurrence with the introduction" while at the same time he felt he had to reserve further judgment until he and other departments of the Polish Government

16. The German White Book, Doc. No. 88, 103.

17. Ibid., Doc. No. 89, 105.

18. Ibid., Doc. No. 91, 106.

had had time to examine the document more carefully.¹⁹ A month or more elapsed before, on July 30, 1937, Beck handed back to the German Ambassador his (Beck's, i.e.) reworking of the declaration, "with his alterations", as von Moltke put it in reporting to his Foreign Office.²⁰ Yet another month elapsed filled with considerable agitation of the Silesian question on both the German and the Polish sides. Finally, on August 26, 1937, von Moltke was able to report to his Foreign Office that "In today's conversation on the minorities communiqué the Polish Foreign Minister accepted our formulation".²¹

There is an interesting apparent contradiction here in the two German documents we have been quoting. What happened, between July 30 and August 26, to Beck's "alterations"? Did they fall to the ground? Or does von Moltke's "our formulation" include the Polish alterations? The question is raised only to indicate the lack of any grounds for answer in the documents available for this thesis.

Further delay ensued before actual joint publication of the Minorities Declaration. The German documents (the Poles are silent on the whole issue, except for the Minorities Declaration itself and Hitler's comment on it), indicate a continuing German concern over the Upper Silesian question, particularly in respect of a School Law which infringed the

19. The German White Book, Doc. No. 91, 106.

20. Ibid., Doc. No. 94, 108.

21. Ibid., Doc. No. 95, 111.

rights of the German minority,²² and in respect to the activities of Grazynski, Voivode of Upper Silesia, in German eyes an ultra-nationalist Pole the single aim of whose administration was the de-Germanising of the Upper Silesian German minority.²³ There is no evidence that German anxiety had been allayed on either of these counts when the Minorities Declaration was jointly published by the two Governments on November 5, 1937.²⁴ It is doubtful whether it had any effect on the actual activities of either Power. Certainly friction over the minorities question was endemic to German-Polish relations up to the outbreak of the Second World War, usually lost, however, in the importance attached to other and larger issues.

By the opening months of 1938, Hitler had re-armed and re-militarized the Rhineland. Germany was no longer vulnerable at that point. A species of fear-inhibiting action seemed to characterize European statesmen so that the entire diplomatic system of post-war Europe seemed to collapse during the crisis.

Before Polish actions and attitudes during the period from January to September, 1938, can be understood, it is important to note that both White Books are reticent about this period, as are The British Blue Book and The French Yellow Book. The latter books deal primarily with affairs of the post-Munich period; whereas, the reticence of The German White

22. The German White Book, Doc. No. 98, 112.

23. Ibid., Doc. No. 99, 113.

24. Ibid., Doc. No. 101, 114-115.

Book and The Polish White Book may perhaps be explained by a tactical need for silence about the ultimate aims of the two countries - Germany to subjugate Czechoslovakia and Austria; Poland - Lithuania and Cieszyn.

The course of Polish foreign policy during 1938 was forecast by Beck in an address to the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Diet on January 10. He expressed detachment from the League and, in particular, from the application of the sanctions clause:

Moreover, we are not alone in affirming that it is impossible for a group of States alone to bear the heavy burdens and obligations which are imposed by the Covenant of the League of Nations on its Members while the other States are relieved of these burdens. I allude . . . to the obligations which a State individually might be compelled to fulfil automatically, solely on account of its participation in the League²⁵

This was of course only a reiteration of the point of view of the German-Polish Minorities Declaration of November 5, 1937, which guaranteed "the internal cohesion of the two States" but at the same time purported to create proper conditions for the existence of German and Polish minorities in each of the two States.

The League with its obligations was still Beck's bête noire. Nazi-Germany was still the friend, a friendship further confirmed by Hitler's further protestations of peaceful intentions. Commenting on Polish-German relations on January 14, 1938, Hitler stressed that "territorial adjust-

25. Documents (1938), I, 309.

ments would be out of all proportion to the sacrifices necessary to bring them about, and were, therefore, of no importance whatever".²⁶

Assurances were made to the Polish representative that "Polish rights in Danzig would be in no way violated, and further, that the Free City's legal status would not be affected in any way".²⁷

The Poles continued to delude themselves through Hitler's many surprises of that year. On February 12, Dr. Schuschnigg, the Austrian Chancellor, was summoned to Berchtesgaden, the first in a series of moves which ended with the destruction of Austria on March 12.

On February 20, Hitler told the Reichstag that a constant improvement in relations with Poland had taken place and that the menace of Danzig had lost its importance; only through the 1934 Agreement, he said, had the poison between the relations of both countries been removed.²⁸

Two days later, Goering in a conversation with Smigly-Rydz said that German-Polish relations had found expression in "a clear and reasonable policy". The conversation then turned to the potential of the Soviet Army. The best German professional opinion, Goering said, was that the resources, material and human, of the Russian armies were at a low level. In the event of a Russo-German war, therefore, the defeat of the Soviets would be easy. Politically, the Soviet Union represented a serious danger to

26. The Polish White Book, Doc. No. 36, 43.

27. Ibid.

28. His Majesty's Stationery Office, The Government Blue Book, Documents Concerning German-Polish Relations and Outbreak of Hostilities Between Great Britain and Germany on September 3, 1939. Doc. No. 5, 40. The Polish White Book, Doc. No. 37, 44.

Germany. Hence the harmonization between Poland and Germany was absolutely necessary. In Germany it was realized that the defeat of Poland by the Soviets would in turn spell the Bolshevization of Germany.²⁹

The Anschluss of March, 1938, afforded Poland an opportunity to settle the long-standing dispute with Lithuania. Since 1920 Polish-Lithuanian relations had been severed as a result of the Polish occupation of the province and the city of Vilna. All means of communications and diplomatic relations had been severed. During the course of these years, there had been many annoying frontier incidents which had, however, been settled, although in an atmosphere of mutual coolness and reserve. A frontier incident provoked a Polish-Lithuanian crisis in March, 1938.

On March 15 Zechlin, the German Minister in Lithuania, telegraphed to the Foreign Ministry that on March 11 a Polish soldier who had strayed across the Lithuanian frontier was shot and killed. The Estonian Minister in Warsaw took up the matter with the Polish Foreign Ministry on Lithuania's behalf, to be informed that the Poles demanded the immediate resumption of diplomatic relations under threat that if the Lithuanian Government failed to answer or answered in the negative, the Polish Government would

29. The Polish White Book, Doc. No. 38, 45.

wait 24 hours or at the latest 36 hours before resorting to the use of military force.³⁰

Mackensen, the German Ambassador in Italy, stated on March 16 in a memorandum to the State Secretary that the Lithuanian Government had requested a commission to investigate the incident, and the commencement of negotiations with a view to preventing the recurrence of such incidents.³¹ The Polish Government refused the offer on the grounds that it did not afford a sufficient guarantee of security. The Lithuanians regarded the situation as serious for they felt that Poland was utilizing this incident as an excuse to secure compensation in Lithuania for the increase in power gained by the Germans.³²

On March 17 a formal ultimatum was presented to the Lithuanian Government which demanded:

1. "Immediate resumption of diplomatic and consular relations;
2. Restoration of railroad and mail communications;
3. Conclusion of a minority treaty;
4. Conclusion of a trade and customs agreement;
5. Deletion of the article in the Lithuanian Constitution which called Vilna the capital of Lithuania;

30. His Majesty's Stationery Office, Documents on German Foreign Policy 1918 - 1945 (London, 1953), Series 'D', V, Doc. No. 321, 427. Herein-after cited as Documents on German Foreign Policy.

31. Ibid., Doc. No. 322, 428.

32. Ibid.

6. Full satisfaction for the border incident. In the case of default the most severe consequences [were] threatened, including military action".³³

Though the ultimatum failed to specify a time limit, forty-eight hours were fixed for acceptance by the Lithuanian Government.³⁴ Polish troops were concentrated on the frontier and a violent anti-Lithuanian press campaign was launched in Poland. On March 19 the ultimatum was accepted by Lithuania.³⁵ The Soviet Union, though sympathetic to Lithuania, took no serious action to aid that country.

The German attitude in this dispute is an interesting one. Ribbentrop analyzed it in a memorandum dated March 17, 1938, in which he said that it was in the interests of Germany to maintain the status quo between Poland and Germany because:

1. Germany had annexed Austria and desired a peaceful international situation.
2. Germany had "no interest in [i.e. was opposed to] the annexation of Lithuania by Poland since thereby Lithuania would cease to be the object of compensation for restitution of the Corridor to Germany".³⁶

Ribbentrop also stated that should a Polish-Lithuanian conflict come into being then the occupation of Memel was to take place within a rela-

33. Documents on German Foreign Policy, Doc. No. 327, 432.

34. Ibid., Doc. No. 330, 435.

35. Ibid., Doc. No. 337, 441.

36. Ibid., Doc. No. 329, 433.

tively short period of time. And finally, he proposed that

a) Germany be advised of any measures taken by the Polish Government;

b) Germany was to exert influence upon the Lithuanian Government so that the Polish demands would be accepted. Furthermore, the occupation of the Vilna area would make it difficult to contrive other reasons for the occupation of further territory.³⁷

German pressure, especially from Ribbentrop forced the Lithuanian Government to accede to the Polish demands. The German Foreign Minister informed Šaulys, the Lithuanian Minister in Germany, that "in the opinion of the Reich Government Poland's note was very moderate and that [they] could only advise unconditional acceptance of the Polish proposal".³⁸

The whole Polish project was thus mistimed from the German point of view, for German interests were particularly engaged here, whose possession by Lithuania even under League guarantee was held by Germans a wrong which they could never accept.

The Polish Foreign Minister defended the Polish action with an argument whose specious impudence almost out-Hitlered Hitler. The League, he said, had recommended the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries. Since Lithuania had refused to comply with

37. Documents on German Foreign Policy, Doc. No. 329, 433.

38. Ibid., 332, 436.

the League's ruling, Poland took action since "this threatening state of affairs might have lasted for many years more".³⁹

The establishment of diplomatic relations with Lithuania did not remove the differences between the two countries. It merely gave Poland a more convenient instrument for agitating them.

Did Beck see the light at any time before the end and think of reversing his pro-German policy by some sort of alternative system? No conclusive evidence for such a reversal has been seen in the material available for this thesis, but it is important to note that as early as 1934 Beck had held a number of important political meetings with statesmen of the Baltic countries. In 1934 the Estonian Minister, Seljamaa, paid a visit to the Polish capital and a reciprocal visit was made by the Polish Foreign Minister to Tallin within a few months.⁴⁰ During the year conversations with members of the Latvian Government were also held.⁴¹ The growth of friendly relations with Latvia was the subject of an address by Beck to the Sejm on January 15, 1936.⁴² Again in his summary of Polish foreign policy for the course of the year, Beck mentioned the

39. Documents (1938), I, 304. In a speech to the Senate on March 23, Beck remarked that the "absence of the most ordinary international intercourse was not only politically dangerous, but paralysed normal relations between our two States." (Ibid.)

40. Documents (1934), 397-398.

41. Ibid.

42. Documents (1935), I, 230.

growing rapprochement between Latvia and Poland. Norway was also cultivated. In 1936 the Norwegian Foreign Minister, Koht, visited Poland. From the nature of his visit the Polish Foreign Minister assumed that in Poland and the Scandinavian countries, there were "many reasons . . . to find an even firmer basis of solidarity in face of the existing European problems".⁴³ Similarly in 1937 the Scandinavian countries, Sweden in particular, showed considerable sympathy with the Polish policy. But whatever hopes Beck may have had of, say, establishing a Baltic bloc to counteract the growing strength and aggressive tendencies of Germany, nothing could be done until Poland changed her attitudes and manner of thinking towards Czechoslovakia and Lithuania. Neither Beck nor the country at large seems to have been prepared to make such a major change in Polish policy.

Fortunately for her, Lithuania was forgotten for a time in the storm and furore of the Czech crisis. During the entire crisis all expressions of Polish opinion favored the Germans, and serious press campaigns were launched against the Prague government. The 1934 understanding was still alive and flourishing and there were in addition serious and long-standing Polish quarrels with Czechoslovakia -- Cieszyn, the minorities, Beck's constant refusal to submit disputes to the League Council. According to The German White Paper Czechoslovakia was a base for serious anti-Polish propaganda which was Communist in origin. Finally, Polish indignation at

43. Documents (1936), 410-411.

Soviet pressure to permit passage of Soviet troops across Poland to aid Czechoslovakia forced Polish opinion into further expressions of hostility to Czechoslovakia as the reason for being of the Soviet pressure.⁴⁴

Throughout the spring and summer of 1938 both the British and French ambassadors in Warsaw continued to plead with the Polish Government not to contribute to the further weakening of Czechoslovakia, not to join Germany in a dismemberment of that unhappy country. Their pleadings were ignored.

The summer of 1938 saw Czechoslovakia embroiled with Germany over the question of the Karlsbad Decrees and the activities of the Sudeten Germans, an embroilment climaxing in the Moravska Ostrava incident and the outbreak of further disorder in the Sudetenland. Mr. Chamberlain took his umbrella to his first meeting with Hitler at Berchtesgaden on September 15. There he was faced by a Hitler ultimatum, whereupon after consultation with his Cabinet and with French foreign officials he told Dr. Benes that neither Britain nor France were prepared to fight on her behalf. Thus the Czech Prime Minister was forced to accept the Anglo-French Plan of Surrender.⁴⁵

Humiliated by the British and the French, Czechoslovakia was now to be further humiliated by the Poles. On September 21 the Polish Government submitted a note to the Czechoslovak Government demanding that the

44. Documents on German Foreign Policy, II, 855.

45. R. W. Seton-Watson, From Munich to Danzig (London, 1939), 62.

Polish territory in Cieszyn should be freed of discrimination and that the note should serve as the basis of discussions.⁴⁶ Two days later the Polish Government was warned by Moscow that any invasion of Czechoslovak territory would result in the cancellation of the Soviet-Polish Non-Aggression Pact of 1932.⁴⁷ The Polish reply to the Soviet warning was that Polish troop concentrations were for the defence of the Polish State and were of an internal nature having no connection whatsoever with Soviet affairs. A second Polish note delivered to the Czechoslovak Government on September 27 demanded Czech withdrawal from the Cieszyn territory prior to the commencement of negotiations.⁴⁸

The determination of Poland to act against Czechoslovakia was further increased by the publication of the text of the Munich Agreement, the formal surrender of Czechoslovakia by Britain and France. While Poland had not been a party to the Munich Agreement, her claims to territorial adjustment were upheld in the Annex to the Agreement.⁴⁹ Bolstered by this assurance of German support and Franco-British neutrality, Beck forwarded an ultimatum to the Czechoslovak Government demanding the evacuation of Cieszyn by noon of October 1, failing which Polish troops would

46. Documents on German Foreign Policy, II, Doc. No. 553, 861. Gazeta Polska, cited in Archives, 3251E.

47. Gazeta Polska, cited in Archives, 3233C. Documents on German Foreign Policy, II, Doc. No. 582, 898.

48. Gazeta Polska, cited in Archives, 3251E.

49. Documents on German Foreign Policy, II, Doc. No. 675, 1015.

march into the territory.⁵⁰ There was little that Czechoslovakia could do except to accede to the ultimatum. On October 2, the Polish civil and military authorities took over the first zone beyond the Olza river and by the 10th the occupation of Cieszyn had been completed.⁵¹

Poland gained a population of 227,400 of whom 72 per cent were Poles. In addition to possessing rich coal and coke deposits, the heavy industries and railway junctions were to be of strategic importance to Poland during the forth-coming struggle with Germany.⁵²

Hitler continued to express his satisfaction at the peaceful co-existence of Poland and Germany. In a speech in the Sportpalast, September 26, 1938, he said:

We realise that here are two peoples which must live together and neither of which can do away with the other. A people of 33 million will always strive for an outlet to the sea. A way for understanding, then, had to be found; it has been found; and it will be ever further extended. Certainly things were hard in this area. The nationalities and small national groups frequently quarreled among themselves. But the main fact is that the two Governments, and all reasonable and clear-sighted persons among the two peoples in the two countries, possess the firm will and determination to improve their relations. It was a real work of peace, of more worth than all the chattering in the League of Nations Palace at Geneva.⁵³

But a rift was in the wind. After Czechoslovakia, Danzig was next on the Nazi programme and hardly a month elapsed between Munich and the first Nazi demand for the re-incorporation of Danzig into the Reich. This was the beginning of the Polish disillusion, as we shall see in the next chapter.

50. Gazeta Polska, cited in Archives, 3251E.

51. Gazeta Polska, cited in Archives, 3284D.

52. Gazeta Polska, cited in Archives, 3284D.

53. The British Blue Book, Doc. No. 7, 40.

CHAPTER VII

THE DISILLUSION OF 1938-9 AND THE FINAL COLLAPSE OF THE PACT

On October 24, 1938, von Ribbentrop received Lipski at Berchtesgaden and presented him with a new programme for the solution of the Danzig question. "Danzig" said the German Foreign Minister", was German -- it always had been German, and it would always remain German".¹ These German interests demanded, he said:

1. The return of the Free State of Danzig to the German Reich.
2. An extra-territorial Reichsautobahn to be built across the Corridor, and likewise an extra-territorial multiple-track railway.
3. Poland to receive in the Danzig area an Autobahn, a railroad, and a free port.
4. Poland to be guaranteed a market for her goods in the Danzig area.
5. The two nations to recognize and guarantee their respective boundaries.
6. An extension of the German-Polish treaty ten to twenty-five years.
7. Both countries to add to their treaty a consultation clause.
8. The Polish Republic to accede to an Anti-Comintern Pact. Thereby, Polish adherence to the Non-Aggression Pact of July, 1932, would be destroyed as would her rôle of 'balance' between Russia and Germany.²

1. The German White Book, Doc. No. 197, 200.
2. Documents on German Foreign Policy, V, Doc. No. 81, 106. The German White Book, Doc. No. 197, 200.

Ribbentrop also suggested that should Poland accede to the German demands, a quid pro quo be allowed by Germany in the establishment of a common Polish-Hungarian frontier in Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia.³

This was too much and too new for Lipski, who had to refer it all to Beck. At the interview, though, he felt competent to warn Ribbentrop that the reunion of the Free City with the Reich would be impossible. Beck could never be able to prevail on the Polish public to accept these German suggestions.⁴

Beck's answer, delivered by Lipski on October 31 was that any attempt to incorporate the Free City into the Reich would result in a conflict.⁵ While Polish officials were willing to have the League of Nations' guarantee of the Danzig Statute replaced by a Polish-German treaty, the customs union and rights of Polish citizens would have to be preserved.⁶

Despite this, during the month of October, Poland went on with the project of a common frontier with Hungary. For political and military reasons, Poland attached the greatest importance to such a common frontier.⁷ Not only would it serve as a strengthening of Polish defence against Russia

3. The Polish White Book, Doc. No. 44, 48.

4. Documents on German Foreign Policy, V, Doc. No. 81, 106.

5. The Polish White Book, Doc. No. 45, 50.

6. The German White Book, Doc. No. 198, 202. Documents on German Foreign Policy, V, Doc. No. 101, 128.

7. Documents on German Foreign Policy, V, Doc. No. 100, 126.

but it would extend the Polish sphere of influence and be helpful in bringing together the eastern states into some sort of a neutral security zone.⁸ Thus it was a plan directed not only against Germany but also against Russia. Italy showed some interest in the idea for it would not only please Hungary but would curb the success of Germany. Unfortunately, Germany was giving the directions in the Danubian basin and the Polish refusal to surrender Danzig to the Reich caused "obstacles" to be placed in the way of Poland establishing a common frontier with Hungary in Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia. To Poland the Vienna award of November 2 (the Ribbentrop-Ciano arbitration of the disputed frontier question), was a serious diplomatic blow. It clearly showed that since Poland had refused to co-operate with Germany over the matter of Danzig, Germany was no longer prepared to support Poland in her designs on other countries. The beginning of the end of the Pact of 1934 had arrived.

The restraining hand of Berlin was removed from Danzig, and the Danzig agitation was stepped up in intensity. The Polish Government showed some concern and in an interview with Ribbentrop on November 19, Lipski remarked on the increasing difficulty which Poland was having over the question of Danzig.⁹ Ribbentrop replied that the long-term solution for the German-Polish problem was the re-incorporation of Danzig within

8. Documents on German Foreign Policy, V, Doc. No. 64, 87-88.

9. Ibid., Doc. No. 101, 128.

the Reich and that he was greatly surprised to learn that such a solution would endanger German-Polish relations.¹⁰ German activities were expanded to such a degree that by the beginning of December Beck began to be afraid. In an interview with von Moltke on the 14th, the most he could say was to hope that "unwelcomed faits accomplis would be avoided",¹¹ and that the policy inaugurated by Pilsudski would be continued.¹²

While a psychosis was created in Danzig to convince the population of the necessity of being returned to the Reich, the first addendum to the Directive of October 21, 1938, was issued by General Keitel on November 28, 1938. It specified that plans for the surprise seizure of Danzig were to be submitted by the various branches of the Wehrmacht on January 10, 1939.¹³

Meanwhile Beck was invited by Hitler to call at Berchtesgaden on his way home from a Christmas holiday on the Riviera. Beck arrived on January 5, 1939, and when the Chancellor asked whether he had any special questions to ask, Beck replied that Danzig and the Danube were difficulties requiring settlement by both countries.¹⁴

10. Documents on German Foreign Policy, V, Doc. No. 101, 129.

11. The German White Book, Doc. No. 199, 204.

12. Ibid.

13. Documents (1939-46), I, 97.

14. The Polish White Book, Doc. No. 48., 53.

Hitler explained how the arbitration at Vienna had come about and blamed the Hungarian Government for its failing "to give effect to the postulate regarding Carpathian Ruthenia".¹⁵ As to Danzig, the German populace felt keenly on this issue the Chancellor said, and he emphasized that sooner or later the Free City would return to the Reich.¹⁶ Such a development would not, however, preclude a guarantee for the interests of Poland in the city and a mutual agreement to that effect could be drawn up quickly.¹⁷

Beck, one may be permitted to infer both from his reply and from the next document in this Polish series, was completely stunned by this statement of an apparently new Nazi policy coming as it did from the fountain-head of Nazi policy. The most he could muster by way of reply at this interview were some weak remarks about Polish concern over recent events in Danzig and the fact that "the widest spheres in Polish society, were particularly sensitive on this matter".¹⁸

Hitler, master of the interview as always, replied to this by reiterating the need for something new, a new form, for which, said Beck, he used the term Koerperschaft, which should at one and the same time safeguard both German and Polish interests.¹⁹ But, Hitler went on to say

15. The Polish White Book, Doc. No. 48, 53.

16. Documents on German Foreign Policy, V, Doc. No. 119, 156. The German White Book, Doc. No. 200, 206.

17. Ibid.

18. The Polish White Book, Doc. No. 48, 54.

19. Ibid.

"the Minister could be quite at ease, there would be no faits accomplis in Danzig, and nothing would be done to render difficult the situation of the Polish Government".²⁰

It needed more than Hitler's soothing epilogue to set Beck at his ease. A full twenty-four hours later he was still in a state of gloom when he met Ribbentrop in Munich, although he had recovered sufficiently from the emotional shock to be able at least to send a message through Ribbentrop to Hitler of the things he had been either too shocked or otherwise inhibited to say. Would Ribbentrop please inform Hitler that whereas he, Beck, had left all previous conversations with German statesmen in an optimistic mood, today for the first time he was pessimistic. Particularly in regard to Danzig he "saw no possibility whatever of agreement".²¹ Ribbentrop also spoke soothingly. Germany was not, he said seeking any violent solution. The basis of the German policy towards Poland was still a desire for the further building up of friendly relations.²² Danzig, yes, but there would also be a German guarantee of Polish possessions.²³ This further reassurance plus the fact of the familiar surroundings of his office in Warsaw seem to have restored Beck's

20. The Polish White Book, Doc. No. 48, 54.

21. Ibid., Doc. No. 49, 54.

22. Ibid.

23. Documents on German Foreign Policy, V, Doc. No. 120, 160.

morale and his confidence in the German pact. At any rate on January 12, 1939, he could inform the French Ambassador Noël that the relations existing between Poland and Germany were satisfactory, despite certain difficulties, and that he felt that Hitler was not preparing a crusade against anyone, and that his hostility against Moscow was as in the days gone by.²⁴

On January 25, Ribbentrop arrived in Warsaw for a three day state visit. At a banquet given in his honor, he expressed the sentiment that all problems in the future would be solved "with due regard to the respect and understanding of the rightful interests of both sides".²⁵

Further interviews were held between Ribbentrop, the President of the Polish Republic, and Marshal Smigly-Rydz on the 26th. The German representative stressed that the German proposals regarding the return of Danzig and the construction of an extra-territorial motor-road and railway to East Prussia were extra-ordinarily moderate.²⁶ The allocation of valuable German territory to Poland, under the stipulations of the Versailles Treaty, was regarded by Germany as a great injustice. Moreover, "ninety-nine of a hundred Englishmen or Frenchmen would say at once, if asked, that at least the return of Danzig and of the Corridor, was a natural demand on the part of Germany".²⁷

24. The French Yellow Book, Doc. No. 37, 49.

25. The Polish White Book, Doc. No. 50, 55.

26. The German White Book, Doc. No. 202, 209. In Beck's record of the conversation, he "categorically rejected" the proposal for an extra-territorial road. The Polish White Book, Doc. No. 52, 56.

27. The German White Book, Doc. No. 202, 209.

Ribbentrop's main objective during his visit to Warsaw seems to have been to draw Poland into an Anti-Comintern Pact. Marshal Smigly-Rydz explained that it would be impossible for Poland to adhere to such a pact regardless of the German assertion that "the U.S.S.R. was quite incalculable in her behaviour, and one could never foresee what she would be doing next".²⁸

The end result of these conversations "was a kind of Gentlemen's Agreement between the two Ministers, to the effect that if the League of Nations withdrew from Danzig a Polish-German Declaration would immediately be published, stating that until an understanding between Germany and Poland was reached on Danzig the status quo would be maintained there".²⁹

Beck seems to have been still determined to observe the spirit of the 1934 pact. From some source the French Ambassador had learned of the demand for "a corridor through the Corridor" although of the demand for Danzig he was apparently ignorant.³⁰ When he questioned Beck about his conversations with von Ribbentrop, the Polish Minister replied that "nothing new had been concluded or signed between the Governments of Warsaw and of Berlin" and he particularly promised to inform the French immediately of any new agreement concerning Danzig!³¹

Though the Ribbentrop conversations had failed to achieve any positive

28. The Polish White Book, Doc. No. 51, 55.

29. Ibid., Doc. No. 52, 56.

30. The French Yellow Book, Doc. No. 42, 52.

31. Ibid.

results within the new German programme, Hitler in his Reichstag speech of January 30 could nevertheless comment on the values of the German Non-Aggression Pact with Poland. Because of the Pact, friendship continued to exist between the two countries during 1938 and it had been a "reassuring factor in the political life of Europe".³²

Meanwhile the sands were running out for Czechoslovakia. The final crisis began on March 10 and in the afternoon of the 15th, Hitler had entered Prague and the Nazi flag was hoisted from the Hradcany Castle in Prague.³³

The occupation of Czechoslovakia by German troops weakened the strategic position of Poland, whose government expressed concern over some of the aspects of the move. During the surprise entry of German troops into Czechoslovakia, a number of unpleasant events had been observed along the Czechoslovak-Polish frontier. At various points, for example, German machine guns had been trained on Polish territory.³⁴ To the Poles these incidents appeared as threats and von Moltke promised to acquaint his government of the Polish uneasiness over these developments. A particularly unpleasant situation had been created at one point during the march-in when the demarcation line had not been adhered to, but von Moltke,

32. The Polish White Book, Doc. No. 57.

33. Namier, op. cit., 69.

34. Documents on German Foreign Policy, VI, Doc. No. 4, 5.

while he had no exact information, said that "there had certainly been no intention of putting Poland out of humour".³⁵ In his account of the interview, there is little hint of the ill-humor which, according to the French Ambassador, von Moltke did not attempt to conceal, even for Beck.³⁶

Hoping to salvage Slovakia out of the ruin as a Polish sphere of influence, Poland and Hungary "hastened to recognize the independence of that country on the day of its proclamation, March 14" ³⁷ Both countries failed in their actions for the Slovak Minister President, Tiso, promptly asked that the Slovak state be placed under protection of the Fuehrer and Chancellor.

The German advance into Slovakia caused profound dismay among the Poles. Beck was still apparently thinking in terms of the 1934 Agreement - "things that concern us can not be decided without us".³⁸ The exclusion of Poland from the Munich Conference had annoyed Beck, but he had nevertheless co-operated loyally in it only to have the Danzig situation stepped up in its intensity. Now the outflanking of Poland in the south and west by Germany was complete.

After the south and west, the north. Germany forestalled Poland in Lithuania by occupying Memel on March 23, 1939.³⁹ The Poles were outwitted and outflanked and, worse yet, ignored. The day that Memel was

35. Documents on German Foreign Policy, VI, Doc. No. 4, 6.

36. The French Yellow Book, Doc. No. 75, 86.

37. Ibid., 79, 90.

38. Namier, op. cit., 86.

39. Survey (1939-1946), 67.

occupied, March 21, Lipski called on von Ribbentrop in Berlin, who made no mention of Memel but reopened the question of Danzig as well as several other matters of direct importance to both countries.⁴⁰

He complained about the tone of the Polish press, and about numbers of student demonstrations, both during Ciano's visit to Warsaw and on other occasions in Danzig. The Chancellor himself was of the opinion that the students were manufacturing the evidence alleged to be the cause of their demonstrations. Lipski could only protest weakly that this was an obvious attempt to prejudice Hitler against the Poles.⁴¹

The main part of the conversation was a long historical debate on the Danzig and Corridor question which came to nothing because each party to the argument was arguing from different premisses. But the argument revealed clearly to Lipski that the Nazis were intransigent on the question of the return of Danzig to Germany. In the course of the interview Lipski managed to tie in the question of Slovakia with that of Danzig and von Ribbentrop proved to be surprisingly conciliatory. Provided Danzig were returned to the Reich and an extra-territorial motor road permitted across the Corridor, it was entirely possible that the Slovak question might be reopened and the present status of Slovakia changed for one under a dual German-Polish guarantee.⁴²

40. Documents on German Foreign Policy, VI, Doc. No. 61, 70.

41. The Polish White Book., Doc. No. 61, 61. Ibid., 62.

42. Documents on German Foreign Policy, VI, 72.

With the earlier, happier relations this might have been the conclusion of the interview. As it was, Lipski was forced to ignore the offer, tied in as it was with the unpalatable Danzig demand, and to continue to stress at some length the importance which Poland attached to Slovakia as a country of fellow-Slavs and therefore alien to the German system, now living under a German protection, "that protection", said Lipski, "being directed against Poland".⁴³

Though the Chancellor was subjecting the Poles to increased pressure in regard to Danzig, he had, as yet, not abandoned the possibility of reaching a peaceful settlement with the Poles. This is confirmed in a document entitled "Information given to the Supreme Commander of the Army [von Brauchitsch] by the Fuehrer on 25 March 1939".⁴⁴

L. [Lipski?] will return from Warsaw on Sunday, 26 March. He was commissioned to ask whether Poland would be prepared to come to some terms with regard to Danzig. The Fuehrer left Berlin during the night of 25 March; he does not wish to be here when L. returns. R. (Ribbentrop) shall negotiate at first. The Fuehrer does not wish, though, to solve the Danzig problem by the use of force. He would not like to drive Poland into the arms of Gt. Britain by doing so.

A military occupation of Danzig would have to be taken into consideration only if L. gives a hint that the Polish Government could not take the responsibility toward their own people to cede Danzig voluntarily and the solution would be easier for them by a fait accompli.

43. The Polish White Book, Doc. No. 61, 63.

44. Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression, VIII, 83-84.

For the time being, the Fuehrer does not intend to solve the Polish question. However, it should now be worked on. A solution in the near future would have to be based on especially favorable political conditions. In that case Poland shall be knocked down so completely that it need not be taken into account as a political factor for the next decades. The Fuehrer has in mind as a solution a borderline advanced from the Eastern border of East-Prussia to the Eastern tip of Upper Silesia. Evacuation and resettlement are questions that remain open. The Fuehrer does not want to go into the Ukraine. Possibly one could establish a Ukrainian State. But these questions also remain open.

From Brauchitsch's note an insight is afforded into the mind of Hitler.

As a pretext for the destruction of Czechoslovakia, the German Sudetenland had sufficed. Now, however, German Danzig was to be used but not as a pretext for the immediate destruction of Poland as long as the Poles were reasonable. If at all possible, it should be recovered without making enemies with the Poles. But he was not prepared to wait indefinitely, and if military force had to be used, it would mean the imposition of a drastic settlement upon the Poles. Everything was contingent upon the response of the Poles.

Polish alarm over the German demands for Danzig resulted in mobilization measures being carried out on March 23.⁴⁵ On March 24, 1939, the German Ambassador in Warsaw reported the calling up of four classes of reservists and reserve officers of technical troops.⁴⁶ Similarly on the same day, the German Consul at Gdynia reported the calling up of reservists

45. Harold Nicholson, Why Britain is at War (London, 1939), 111.

46. The German White Book, Doc. No. 204, 212.

and that the Polish Navy had put out to sea.⁴⁷

The partial mobilization ordered by the Polish Military staff was viewed by the Germans with concern, although General Keitel expressed disbelief in any aggressive designs by the Poles and attributed their actions to "nervousness".⁴⁸

While the Polish army was alerted against any possible German aggression, the establishment of a collective defence system against the growing Nazi menace was attempted by the Statesmen of Europe. On March 18, Reeds, the British Ambassador in Moscow, was acquainted with the Soviet proposal that Russia, Britain, France, Rumania, Poland and Turkey should appoint delegates to meet at Bucharest to discuss the matter of common action in Europe.⁴⁹ On March 19, Halifax informed of the proposal rejected it but added that Britain was preparing to issue a public statement of "solidarity of attitude" between France, Poland, Great Britain and Russia.⁵⁰

47. The German White Book, Doc. No. 205, 213.

48. Documents on German Foreign Policy, VI, Doc. No. 90, 111. To the memorandum of Bismarck, Deputy Director of the Political Department, was attached a marginal note which read: "To the Foreign Minister: A warning to the Poles not to let matters come to a '21st May' with a subsequent '28th May' might be advisable. W [Bismarck], 25/III".

49. Survey (1939-1946), 75-76.

50. Ibid.

The idea of the four-Power declaration seems to have been Chamberlain's. It was to stipulate that if the independence of any European state were threatened, consultations between the signatory powers would be held and the course of action determined.⁵¹

After the four-Power declaration had received Cabinet approval, the French, Polish and Russian governments were contacted regarding its signing.

This was the stage of progress when French President Lebrun and Foreign Minister Bonnet arrived in London on March 21.⁵²

On March 21 and 22 Bonnet held conversations with both Halifax and Chamberlain. Discussions centered upon French help to Rumania and, in particular, to the attitude of Poland. Recalling his vain attempts in 1938 to persuade the Rumanian and Polish Governments to permit the passage of Soviet troops through their territories for Czechoslovakia,⁵³ Bonnet remarked that there was no indication that the passage of the Red Armies through their territories would be permitted at the present time.⁵⁴

A memorandum of the proposal for a four-Power pact was delivered to the Polish Foreign Ministry in Warsaw on March 21,⁵⁵ by Sir Howard Kennard, and on the afternoon of March 22 telegrams were received in London out-

51. Survey (1939-1946), 75-76.

52. Ibid., 77.

53. Survey (1938), II, 132-133, 276-281, 371-372.

54. Survey (1939-1946), 79.

55. Documents (1939-1946), I, 113-114.

lining the reactions of Beck and Arcizewski, Polish Vice-Minister,⁵⁶ To Beck Russian participation seemed

an insuperable objection to Polish signature of the declaration. For Russia and Poland to appear as co-signatories would be tantamount to serving notice on Germany that Poland was abandoning the policy of balancing between her two great neighbours and was openly entering the Russian camp; and that, . . . , would provoke Germany into immediate and disastrous action. He implied that Poland might be willing to associate with Great Britain and France in support of Rumania (though he evidently thought Rumania in no imminent danger) provided that Russia was excluded from the arrangement.⁵⁷

The proposal for a declaration appeared in the throes of collapse when Bonnet suggested that the British and French Governments ascertain whether or not Rumania would resist in the face of German attack, and if Poland would come to her assistance.⁵⁸ It was felt that Poland could be persuaded to help Rumania and that if the two states were assured of help by France and Great Britain, perhaps no objections would be raised to Russian military aid.

Yet, it was apparent that at this early stage, Poland had been granted preference over Russia in this new "security system". While France and Great Britain were prepared to exert strong pressure upon Poland to make her promise military aid to Rumania, they thought that no amount of

56. Survey (1939-1946), 79.

57. Ibid.

58. An assurance that the Rumanian Government would resist a German attack was the substance of a memorandum which reached the Foreign Office on March 21. D. Brit. F. P. IV. No. 457. Cited in Survey (1939-1946), 80.

pressure could induce Poland to ally herself with Russia. Both countries apparently failed to realize the importance of securing Russian adherence to the declaration.

On March 22 the British Ambassador at Warsaw was informed by Beck that the immediate conclusion of an Anglo-Polish agreement was being proposed by him.⁵⁹ The next day instructions were forwarded to Count Raczynski at London to inquire of Halifax whether or not

the British Government would not be prepared to consider the possibility of concluding . . . immediately a bilateral agreement in the spirit of the proposed declaration.⁶⁰

The Polish counter-proposal was, according to Raczynski, meant to avoid "the association of Poland with the Soviet Union in a public declaration."⁶¹ Upon being questioned by Halifax as to whether or not Beck desired a guarantee of assistance from Great Britain, and, if so, whether the arrangement could be made mutual, Raczynski showed no objection to the British Foreign Minister's interpretation of Beck's proposal.⁶²

The idea of a reciprocal Anglo-Polish guarantee was taking shape. Since the Polish need of a guarantee did not seem at the moment acute, fuller discussions regarding Beck's proposals were left until the Polish Minister's arrival in London on April 3, 1939.

59. The Polish Foreign Minister's motives were difficult to discern. Noël suspected that Beck wished to be free of commitments to any country and expected the British Government to reject his proposal for a bilateral agreement. Noël (L'Aggression Allemande contre la Pologne, p. 283). Cited in Survey (1939-1946), 83.

60. The Polish White Book, Doc. No. 66, 70.

61. D. Brit. F.P. IV, No. 518, p. 500. Cited in Survey (1939-1946), 83.

62. Survey (1939-1946), 83.

The Polish communication of March 24 gave a coup de grâce to the British proposal of a Four-Power Declaration. In due course the Soviet Union was notified, but no suggestions regarding Soviet co-operation were made in London until the middle of April. This had created an unfavourable impression in Moscow so that when the Western Powers approached the Soviet Union with new proposals, negotiations had an unfavourable start.⁶³

Various factors were responsible for bringing about the British interim guarantee to Poland. Doubts about Russian intentions and of her value as an ally, an overestimation of the Polish ability to provide a second front in a Franco-German conflict, suspicions regarding the relations of Beck with Germany, and the fear that Germany would strike at Poland before a security system had been organized.⁶⁴ It was this last threat which caused the British Government to inaugurate a 'new epoch' in the foreign policy of Britain. As Halifax stated before the House of Lords on April 3, 1939:

While His Majesty's Government were examining the situation and considering how best they might play their part in the promotion of the peaceful and orderly conduct of international affairs . . . certain circumstances seemed to suggest the possibility of dangerous developments in the relations between Germany and Poland In advance of the conclusion of a more comprehensive understanding, they thought it right to make quite plain what, in the interim, their position would be in the event of Poland finding herself confronted with the danger which they had some reason to apprehend.⁶⁵

63. Survey (1939-1946), 85.

64. Ibid., 85-87.

65. H. L. Deb. 5th ser. vol. 112, coll. 575-5. Cited in Survey (1939-1946), 87.

As we have seen, it had been agreed on March 22 that approaches were to be made to Rumania and Poland regarding their intentions against possible German aggression. Since it was believed that no urgency on the matter existed, it was not until the night of March 27/28 that telegrams were despatched to Kennard in Warsaw and Hoare in Bucharest containing information regarding the joint Angle-French démarches to be made when French approval had been received.⁶⁶

The telegram to Warsaw made reference to Polish reluctance to be associated with Russia in the four-Power Declaration. Moreover it stated the British Government had been warned that Soviet inclusion "would not only jeopardise the success of . . . constructive [British] effort, but also [would] tend to consolidate the relations of the parties to the Anti-Comintern Pact, as well as excite anxiety among a number of friendly Governments".⁶⁷ The balance of the telegram dealt with the consolidation of Polish and Rumanian views regarding possible German aggression.

On March 28 in response to the question in the House of Commons as to whether or not Britain had notified Poland of the British intention to come to her aid in the event of a German attack, Chamberlain remarked:

66. Survey (1939-1946), 87.

67. Ibid., 88. The British Ambassador in Rome on March 24 reported the Hungarian Ambassador's opinion that, 'if Great Britain linked up with Soviet Russia on European security, she would be cutting her own throat, as this would automatically indispose a large number of other countries who . . . were violently anti-Soviet'. D. Brit. F. P. IV, No. 509. Cited in Survey (1939-1946), 88.

"I think I must still maintain a certain reserve on this matter".⁶⁸

French Government approval of the terms of the telegrams dispatched to Hoare and Kennard came in the afternoon of March 29, and the same evening, both Ambassadors received instructions to make the necessary démarches.⁶⁹ The next evening Kennard spoke to Beck regarding Britain's attitude towards the Polish proposals. During the course of the conversation, Hankey, the Secretary of the British Embassy in Warsaw called upon Sir Howard with instructions from London. Kennard was instructed to ask "the Polish Government whether they had any objection to a British Government guarantee to meet any action which clearly threatened Polish independence, and which the Polish Government accordingly considered it vital to resist with their national forces. Mr. Chamberlain would propose to make a declaration on the subject in the House of Commons the next day, March 31".⁷⁰ Sir Howard was informed that the British proposal was acceptable.

While these negotiations were proceeding unhurriedly, Lipski saw von Ribbentrop on March 26 and handed to him the Polish reply to the German demands of March 21.⁷¹ The reply indicated that the Polish Govern-

68. H. C. Deb. 5th ser., vol. 345, coll. 1884-5. Cited in Survey (1939-1946), 89.

69. Survey (1939-1946), 89.

70. The Polish White Book, Doc. No. 68, 71-72.

71. Ibid., Doc. No. 63, 66.

ment was prepared "to act liberally" in regard to the transit facilities between East Prussia and Germany, but it was not prepared to accept the German demands for the restoration of Danzig and the construction of an extra-territorial road and railway.⁷² Ribbentrop somewhat excitedly responded that Polish troop movements in the Pomorze had created a poor impression and that "it reminded him of similar risky steps taken by another State (obviously he was thinking of Czechoslovakia). He added that all aggression on our part against Danzig would be an aggression against the Reich".⁷³

The next day Lipski was summoned for a further interview. After blustering about the outrages at Bromberg, von Ribbentrop concluded that the Polish proposal transmitted on March 26 "could not be regarded by the Foreign Minister as a basis for a settlement of the questions at issue".⁷⁴ On March 28 von Moltke was summoned by Beck. Replying to Ribbentrop's statement that Polish aggression against Danzig would constitute a casus belli, the Polish Foreign Minister announced that "any intervention by the German Government aimed at changing the status quo in Danzig [would] be regarded as an aggression against Poland.

72. The Polish White Book, Doc. No. 68.

73. Ibid., 67.

74. Documents on German Foreign Policy, Doc. No. 108, VI, 136.

"The Ambassador: You want to negotiate at the point of the bayonet!

Mr. Beck: That is your own method".⁷⁵

Despite these German demands, Beck maintained before Western diplomats that German-Polish relations need cause no alarm.⁷⁶ Similarly when Kennard questioned Arcizewski regarding the German demands, the Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs answered that these demands had been presented in the past, and that there was no menacing attitude exhibited by Germany!⁷⁷ On the 30th both Moltke and Beck assured Kennard that there had been no German ultimatum and certainly no indication of a threat in the future.⁷⁸

After March 26 the situation had begun to deteriorate very rapidly. Recurrent reports of German troop movements towards the Polish frontier as well as rumours of clashes between Polish and German troops in Oderberg increased Polish excitement.⁷⁹ More alarming was the threatened military putsch in Danzig on the 29th.⁸⁰ It failed to materialize when Berlin, on advice from Greiser, forbade the agitation.

75. The Polish White Book, Doc. No. 64, 69.

76. e.g. Arcizewski, 25 March (D. Brit. F.P. IV, No. 524) and 28 March (ibid. No. 535); Lipski, 28 (ibid. No. 572), Cited in Survey (1939-1946), 90.

77. Ibid. No. 564, 90. Cited in Survey (1939-1946), 90.

78. D. Brit. F. P. IV, No. 573. Before March 31 the Polish Vice-Minister had informed the Rumanian Minister that an aggressive Act against Danzig had been termed casus belli. On April 1, Beck himself admitted this to Kennard. Survey (1939-1946), 91.

79. Documents on German Foreign Relations, VI, Doc. No. 115, 144.

80. The French Yellow Book, Doc. No. 91, 106-107.

In Poland, war was expected at any moment. Wives and children in the Polish colony in Berlin had been sent away and the Consuls were said to have received instructions to destroy secret papers in their archives.⁸¹

It was reports of this tense atmosphere which prompted the British Government to act. On March 30 Kennard was informed of the Polish acceptance of the British proposal. Having already received the concurrence of France to the proposal, Chamberlain in an afternoon session, March 31, of the House of Commons had this to say:

As the House is aware, certain consultations are now proceeding with other Governments. In order to make perfectly clear the position of His Majesty's Government in the meantime before those consultations are concluded, I now have to inform the House that during that period, in the event of any action which clearly threatened Polish independence, and which the Polish Government accordingly considered it vital to resist with their national forces, His Majesty's Government would feel themselves bound at once to lend the Polish Government all support in their powers. They have given the Polish Government an assurance to this effect.

I may add that the French Government have authorised me to make it plain that they stand in the same position in this matter as do His Majesty's Government.⁸²

Various interpretations were applied to Chamberlain's statement.

Editorials of various newspapers indicated a confusion regarding the declaration. Some expressed the thought that the British guarantee was limited only to the integrity of the Polish-Western frontier, others that the independence of Poland was guaranteed and still others reflected on the

81. The French Yellow Book, Doc. No. 86, 102.

82. The British Blue Book, Doc. No. 17, 77.

possible inclusion of Danzig. Casting aside reflections, there is no denying that the declaration was criticized in Great Britain and that it will continue to be criticized. But criticism does not alter the essential fact of Hitler being confronted with a new situation. He was now faced with the possibility of a coalition and threatened with a general war if he attempted further conquests in Europe.

Hence the "tolerable relationship" which Hitler had hoped to establish with Poland had received a serious blow. The British Government's declaration not only surprised Hitler but caused him to fly into a rage and utter "I'll cook them a stew that they'll choke on".⁸³ Yet in his address at Wilhemshaven on April 1, he failed to make mention of Poland but he excitedly pronounced that "the German Reich [was], however, in no case prepared permanently to tolerate intimidation, or even a policy of encirclement".⁸⁴

While Hitler spent the next few days cruising in the Baltic and inspecting the fortifications of Heligoland, the British guarantee to Poland was debated in the House of Commons. Criticism was levelled against the Chamberlain Government by various members of the House. Churchill scorned Chamberlain for having failed to draw Russia into the ring of French-British adherence.⁸⁵ Lloyd George wished to know how the pledge to Poland

83. H. B. Gisevius, To the Bitter End (London, 1948), 362. Cited in Alan Bullock, Hitler: A Study in Tyranny (London, 1952), 459.

84. The British Blue Book, Doc. No. 20, 87.

85. H. C. Deb. 5th ser., vol. 345, coll. 2500-2. Cited in Survey (1939-1946), 54.

would be fulfilled when possibly not a single tank or gun could be sent to the aid of the Poles from Great Britain. Moreover no help could be expected from France.⁸⁶

Thus the British assessment of the situation had harmful effects. Germany was able to utilize the rejection of Soviet Russia as a grounds for establishing friendly relations with that state, the ultimate result of which was the Non-Aggression Pact of August 23, 1939.⁸⁷

On the same day that Beck arrived in England for consultations with members of the British Foreign Office, a directive was issued to the Commanders-in-Chiefs by Hitler.⁸⁸ It was divided into 3 parts: frontier defence, Operation "White" (the proposed plan for attack upon Poland), and the seizure of Danzig. Plans for Operation 'White' were to be completed so that action could be carried out any time from September 1, 1939. German Policy sought to avoid trouble with Poland, but if a threatening attitude was adopted by Poland against the Reich, a final settlement would be sought regardless of the Pact.⁸⁹ Temporarily Hitler did not know in which direction to proceed. Though Ribbentrop had requested Beck to come to Berlin, he, instead had arrived in London. Discussions held from April 4 to the 6th resulted in the Anglo-Polish communiqué which

86. H. C. Deb. 5th ser., vol. 345, coll. 2507-10. Cited in Survey (1939-1946), 55.

87. The Polish White Book, Doc. No. 168, 185-186.

88. Documents (1939-1946), I, 130.

89. Ibid., 131.

stated "that the two countries were prepared to enter into an agreement of a permanent and reciprocal character to replace the present temporary and unilateral assurance given by His Majesty's Government to the Polish Government".⁹⁰

In their discussions with Beck, Chamberlain and Halifax came out second best. While Poland had promised to aid Great Britain if she were directly attacked, the British had turned their interim guarantee to Poland into a permanent one. The possibility of Poland co-operating with Russia became more remote, and the original intention of Britain to secure Polish assistance to aid Rumania had to be dropped.⁹¹

After the London Conference an atmosphere of frigidity prevailed in German-Polish relations. Lipski had no further contact with either Ribbentrop or Weizsäcker, except on April 6, and von Moltke, who had left his post at Warsaw on April 8 did not return until May 6, although the Polish Foreign Minister had requested to see him immediately after his arrival at Warsaw from London.⁹²

But international attention was temporarily removed from Poland. Italy had invaded Albania on April 7.⁹³ In this atmosphere of tension

90. The Polish White Book, Doc. No. 71, 74.

91. Survey (1939-1946), 101.

92. D. Brit. F.P. V, No. 208. Cited in Survey (1939-1946), 339.

93. Bullock, op. cit., 460.

President Roosevelt despatched a message to both Hitler and Mussolini requesting assurances that aggression would not be committed against some thirty countries. Three days later it was announced in Berlin that a reply to the President's appeal would come on April 28 when the Reichstag had assembled.

The answer came on the appointed day in the shape of a Hitlerian Reichstag speech. After a lengthy exposition in defence of his foreign policy Hitler turned to the question of relations with Great Britain and Poland. For Great Britain he expressed his desire for friendship and co-operation, but this friendship could only endure, he said, if German interests were recognized. This the British refused to do and they had instead threatened Germany with a policy of oppression; consequently, the Naval Treaty of 1935 had been destroyed.⁹⁴

With Poland too, Germany had wished to maintain friendly relations. Germany could not deny Poland an access to the sea but Germany too had legitimate claims on East Prussia and the Free City. To settle the problem he had made an "unprecedented offer" to Poland which had been refused.⁹⁵ Not only had the Polish Republic launched, he said, a campaign of lies against Germany but it had called up troops. In addition, the Anglo-Polish agreement for mutual assistance had been completed with Britain.

94. The British Blue Book, Doc. No. 21, 92-94.

95. The Polish White Book, Doc. No. 75, 79.

This was contrary to the 1934 Declaration. Under these circumstances, the German-Polish Pact of 1934 was no longer in existence.⁹⁶ However, "should the Polish Government wish to come to fresh contractual arrangements governing its relations with Germany", the door was still open.⁹⁷

The speech of April 28, 1939, marked a close in one period of activity by Hitler. Having denounced the Non-Aggression Pact with Poland and the Naval Treaty with Great Britain, Hitler sat back and waited.

On May 5, Beck replied to Hitler. After rejecting Hitler's account of Polish-German negotiations, the Polish Foreign Minister stated that the German demands would not be met. Though Poland desired peace, she would not accept "peace at any price". The one thing "in the lives of men, nations and states which is without price, . . . is honour".⁹⁸ After May 5 the Polish public knew that it was only a question of time before Germany would strike.

96. The Polish White Book, Doc. No. 75, 80.

97. Ibid.

98. Ibid., Doc. No. 77, 88.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

The previous chapters of this thesis have attempted to outline the foreign policy of Colonel Beck in the period from 1934 to 1939. We have followed him through the immediate background of the Non-Aggression Pact of 1934, through its inception, through the period in which it seemed to be mutually satisfactory, through the period during which it began to lose its presumed value and finally through its demise. This examination seems to support the contention that, whatever criticism may be made of Beck's tactics, in the main, his pro-German policy was the only one which, at least under Pilsudski's government, Poland could have pursued.

German-Polish rapprochement, evidenced in the conclusion of the Non-Aggression Pact of 1934, can only be explained by a number of positive factors. In the first place, it obviously worked a halt to Germany's eastern ambitions. Secondly, both Germany and Poland disliked the League of Nations and multilateral agreements. Thirdly, Germany's withdrawal from the League had created a vacancy in the scheme of collective security which Russia was determined to fill, a state of affairs which Poland greatly feared. Fourthly, the Polish nobility and governing classes were grossly afraid of the spread of Communistic doctrine, threatening as it did their large estates. Fifthly, the Polish ruling classes seemed to show sympathy for Germany's economic dislocation and her attempts to resolve the problems of her premature democracy by dictator or one-party tactics. Sixthly, Poland's leader was strongly anti-Russian, a large part

of the Polish people had suffered under the Russian yoke, and the country itself had witnessed Russian forces in 1920 at the gates of Warsaw. Seventhly, Germany flattered the Polish Republic by an apparent negotiation on equal status and thus by an implicit recognition of Great Power status for Poland whose forces were not of a standard to support this Great Power rôle. Eighthly, German assurances stabilized Poland's western frontiers after the Western Powers had refused to do so at the Locarno Conference in 1925. Finally, Poland believed that she had more to lose from Germany than from Russia. Russia during the period 1934-1939 was concerned primarily with her own internal matters while German interests in Danzig and the Corridor threatened to throttle the new country almost before it was born.

There was also one powerful negative reason. The traditional Polish alliance with France had lapsed and had forced Poland to seek an ally elsewhere. Many reasons can be advanced for the cooling in relations between Poland and France following 1921. In 1925 French circles had failed to support the Polish demand for a guarantee of her Eastern frontier. Relations underwent further strain when France concluded a non-Aggression pact with the Soviet Union.⁴ Somewhat naturally, French Foreign Minister Louis Barthou's suggestion for a Four-Power Pact was coolly received by Poland. Poland wanted no part of an alliance which included Russia. Russophobia was endemic to the Polish Government and perhaps to a large part of the Polish people.

And the German menace was more immediate. Germany threatened a

possible seizure of the port of Danzig and a possible establishment of an additional railroad and motor-road through the Corridor, a threat which frightened Poland as a further encroachment upon Polish sovereignty. In addition, the Polish Government feared the German clamour over minority rights in Upper Silesia, the German pressure to establish German-language secondary schools and the German reactions to the expropriation of former Junker estates by Polish authorities. But these were questions of detail which could be negotiated within the frame of the Polish-German Pact. When at the time of the Rhineland crisis, the German menace had grown into a European danger and, by implication, a threat to Poland's existence, it is interesting to notice (and this is perhaps one of the more interesting points revealed in this thesis) that Beck and the Polish Government recoiled completely from the German orientation and offered military aid to France if France should act in opposition to Germany. The reality (momentarily exposed) of German aims had shocked the Poles into the old traditional alignment. But the old partner was unwilling. On the somewhat specious grounds that Great Britain would not support this action, France refused the Polish offer and Beck subsided back into the German orbit, no doubt convinced again of the wisdom of his choice. Certainly after the Rhineland episode, Beck and the Polish Government had little or no faith in France.

What other alternatives could have been pursued by Poland? An attempted analysis of any alternatives must take into account two cardinal facts: that Russia was the traditional principal enemy of Poland and that any agreement with Russia which permitted her to aid Poland with

military force would in all probability result in Polish soil being occupied by Russian troops. Previous experience had taught the Poles that Russia would not voluntarily withdraw her troops. And the Poles, no doubt with reason, were very suspicious of Russian activities in the Baltic countries.

A pro-French policy? While it is true that France to some degree was responsible for the creation of Poland at the end of World War I, and that the alliance with Poland in 1921 had enabled Poland for a time to play the part of a great power, certain negative factors led to a policy of uneasiness and distrust between the two countries. France was pre-occupied with her own internal affairs and she was almost neurotically concerned with the potential dangers of a revived Germany. In any case, what military aid the French could have provided the Poles was of a limited nature for the French were not prepared to attack Germany. Then, too, a dislike of France was harboured by the Poles following the Locarno Conference of 1925 and the French proposal for an Eastern Locarno with the Soviet Union as one of the members. This the Poles were not prepared to accept. Nor could the Poles easily forget the Rhineland. Thus from the Polish viewpoint the attempted establishment of closer ties with France was loaded with the danger of a resumption of unsatisfactory relations with Germany with now only a weak and unwilling ally as a makeweight.

Another alternative might have been the formation of an alliance between Poland and the Baltic countries. It is most probable that the Baltic countries would have fought shy of extending such a friendship to

Poland if Poland had sought to do without the friendship of Germany. Moreover, Polish encroachments in Lithuania and later in Czechoslovakia would have prohibited these two states from entering any so-called Baltic bloc, and such a pact would have died aborning.

Neutrality? The expansionist policy of Pilsudski and of his followers ruled out such a likelihood. Moreover, neutrality would have had to be guaranteed by both Germany and Russia, neither of which was prepared to do so. Nor could Poland afford to behave on her own as a neutral, that is, a country without alliances, when the economic consequences of loss of access to the sea and difficulties over such economic relations with Germany as the questions of revenues from rail traffic and of extensive frozen Polish assets in Germany could only be avoided by pursuing a course of active friendship with her neighbour. For these reasons and others, notably the minorities problem, it is unlikely that Germany would have tolerated an aloof stance on Poland's part. It was in fact Germany who had suggested the Non-Aggression Pact of 1934.

The Great Powers? The League of Nations? Poland harboured a large resentment against the Great Powers for having circumscribed her frontiers below the limits of 1772. It was to restore these frontiers that Pilsudski launched his disastrous campaigns against the Russians in 1920. The Minorities Treaty which the League attached to the resurrected Poland was resented very strongly in Polish circles, particularly in view of the fact that nothing of this nature had been forced upon Germany for the protection of the Polish-speaking minority living in Germany. Sentiment

against the League was in fact so strong in respect of the Minorities Treaty that it was denounced, as we have noticed, in full League Council by Beck in 1934, no doubt under the blanket protection of the newly completed Non-Aggression Pact.

It is reasonable, then, to assume that the pro-German policy of Beck was in the general logic of the Poland of the 1930's. But what of Beck's tactics within this over all strategy? For a just analysis of these tactics it may be well to divide the period of the Pact into three stages: the first from January, 1934 to October 24, 1938; the second from October 24, 1938 to March, 1939; the last from March, 1939 to April 28, 1939.

The first stage seemed to the Poles to be one of understanding with Germany and continued success in the resolution of the difficulties between the two countries. Beck and his representatives were given apparently satisfactory assurances by the Germans of the continued spirit of rap-prochement between the two nations. Evidences of this can be obtained in the conversation of Beck with Greiser on July 4, 1936, in which the Polish Foreign Minister expressed the thought that the Polish Government would show no opposition to alterations in the Danzig Constitution provided Polish rights were guaranteed. Positive assurances were given by the Danzig administration. Again on November 18, 1936, when Beck inquired of Germany "whether the German Government still attached importance to the maintenance of good relations with Poland", the German Ambassador in Warsaw declared that "the principles and factors which led to the Polish-German understanding still held their full meaning and value". In this same year,

as we have noted, the Poles were even able to block the formidable Dr. Schacht. Throughout 1937 and 1938 assurances were given to Beck of the continued co-operation of Germany with Poland. For example, on January 14, 1938, the German Chancellor reassured Beck that no violation of Polish rights in Danzig would occur. In September, these reassurances were repeated more openly in a Reichstag speech. True the Poles were pressed in Danzig, but the Danzig Nazi administration, no doubt often acting under secret orders, was also held in check from Berlin within the frame of the Pact. As far as Polish rights in Danzig were concerned, Beck could claim a large degree of success which he could and did attribute to the German alliance. Within this frame Beck even connived at the Nazification of Danzig.

The Germans unmasked themselves and demanded on October 24, 1938, Danzig. Here a categorical "No" was given by the Polish Foreign Minister on October 31, 1938. Yet even now Hitler wished to continue the Polish alliance. In the Munich Agreement, an Annex provided that Poland was to obtain territorial adjustment. Within this frame the Polish demands for Cieszyn and for the re-establishment of diplomatic relations with Lithuania both had the support of Germany. Many condemnations have been hurled at Beck for the aggressive moves that Poland made in the year 1938, but at least they represent Polish successes. Too, Beck may have seen through the policy of Hitler and have thought that the inclusion of these territories within the Polish fold would strengthen her militarily and in terms of natural resources. He may have also thought that it would provide a temporary stop-gap to the German Drang nach Osten. Or, again, he may have envisaged Poland as an eastern

Italy, a Berlin-Warsaw axis to match the Berlin-Rome one. Certainly he wanted Slovakia in some sort of satellite status.

But March 14, 1939, shattered this dream and Beck began to listen to the British and the French, and finally, on April 28, 1939, in the Reichstag the German Chancellor denounced the Non-Aggression Pact of 1934. Hence the German alliance was at an end. Even then Beck still held hopes of reaching an agreement with Berlin but it was hopeless. By now Poland was surrounded on three sides and the military defence of the country was indeed most precarious. Despite this, Beck his faith in the German rapprochement badly shaken, was still convinced that an agreement of some sort with Berlin was possible and he took no action to reach agreements with the surrounding countries. It was only on the initiative of Great Britain that an Anglo-Polish Agreement was to materialize in August, 1939, but then it was too late.

Here, perhaps, is the real error of Beck's tactics - he had such a blind faith in the German rapprochement that he excluded from his thoughts and action other countries. A Russophobia, perhaps justifiable in view of Polish experiences, a knowing that little assistance could be forthcoming from either France or Great Britain blinded Beck to the need for keeping other channels open and forced him to keep complete faith with the eventual destroyers of the Polish Republic.

APPENDIX

M. CLEMENCEAU, PRESIDENT OF THE SUPREME COUNCIL OF THE PRINCIPAL ALLIED
AND ASSOCIATED POWERS, TO M. PADEREWSKI, POLISH PRIME MINISTER¹

Extract

(Translation)

Paris, June 24, 1919

On behalf of the Supreme Council of the Principal Allied and Associated Powers I have the honor to communicate to you herewith in its final form the text of the Treaty which, in accordance with Article 93 of the Treaty of Peace with Germany, Poland will be asked to sign on the occasion of the confirmation of her recognition as an independent State and of the transference in her favor of the territories included in the former German Empire which are assigned to her by the said Treaty.

. . . In this connection I must also call to your attention the fact that the Polish nation owes the recovery of its independence to the endeavors and sacrifices of the Powers in whose name I am addressing you. It is by their decision that Polish sovereignty is being re-established over the territories in question and that the inhabitants of these territories are being incorporated in the Polish nation. For the secure possession of these territories, Poland will in the future largely depend upon the support which the resources of these Powers will afford to the

1. The German White Book, Doc. No. 3, 4-5.

League of Nations. There rests, therefore, upon these Powers an obligation, which they cannot evade, to secure in the most permanent and solemn form guarantees for certain essential rights which will afford to the inhabitants the necessary protection, whatever changes may take place in the internal constitution of the Polish State.

. . . In order to meet this obligation, Clause 93 was inserted in the Treaty of Peace with Germany.

. . . The Powers are dealing here with a new situation, and experience has shown that new provisions are necessary. The territories now being transferred both to Poland and to other states inevitably include a large population speaking other languages and belonging to other races than the people with whom they will be incorporated. Unfortunately, the races have been estranged by long years of bitter hostility. It may be presumed that these populations will be more easily reconciled to their new position if they know from the very beginning that they assured protection and adequate guarantees against any danger of unjust treatment or oppression. The very knowledge that these guarantees exist will, it is hoped, materially help the adjustment which all desire, and will indeed do much to prevent the necessity of imposing it by force.

As regards the individual provisions of the present Treaty, Article 2 guarantees to all inhabitants those fundamental rights which are actually granted in every civilized state.

Provisions 3 to 6 are designed to ensure for all genuine residents in

the territories now transferred to Polish sovereignty the full privileges of citizenship. Article 7 and 8, which are in accordance with the above, provide against any discrimination against those Polish citizens who by their religion, their language, or their race, differ from the large mass of the Polish population. We understand that the Polish Government, far from raising any objection to the content of these articles, have already declared their own firm intention of basing their institutions on the cardinal principles enunciated therein.

The following articles are of rather a different nature in that they provide further special privileges for certain groups of these minorities

TREATY CONCLUDED BETWEEN THE PRINCIPAL ALLIED AND ASSOCIATED POWERS AND
POLAND AT VERSAILLES, June 28, 1919²

Extract

ARTICLE 1

Poland undertakes that the stipulations contained in Articles 2 to 8 of this Chapter shall be recognized as fundamental laws, and that no law, regulation or official action shall conflict or interfere with these stipulations, nor shall any law, regulation or official action prevail to them.

ARTICLE 2

Poland undertakes to assure full and complete protection of life and liberty to all inhabitants of Poland without distinction of birth, nationality, language, race or religion.

All inhabitants of Poland shall be entitled to the free exercise, whether public or private, of any creed, religion or belief, whose practices are not inconsistent with public order or public morals.

ARTICLE 7

All Polish nationals shall be equal before the law and shall enjoy the same civil and political rights without distinction as to race,

2. The German White Book, Doc. No. 5, 5-7.

... and

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language, or religion.

Differences of religion, creed or confession shall not prejudice any Polish national in matters relating to the enjoyment of civil or political rights, as, for instance, admission to public employment, functions and honors, or the exercise of professions and industries.

No restriction shall be imposed on the free use by any Polish national of any language in private intercourse, in commerce, in religion, in the press or in publications of any kind, or at public meetings. Notwithstanding any establishment by the Polish Government of an official language, adequate facilities shall be given to Polish nationals of non-Polish speech for the use of their language, either orally or in writing, before the courts.

ARTICLE 8

Polish nationals who belong to racial, religious or linguistic minorities shall enjoy the same treatment and security in law and in fact as the other Polish nationals. In particular, they shall have an equal right to establish, manage and control at their own expense, charitable, religious and social institutions, schools and other educational establishments, with the right to use their own language and to exercise their religion freely therein.

ARTICLE 9

Poland will provide in the public educational system in towns and

districts in which a considerable proportion of Polish nationals of other than Polish speech are residents, adequate facilities for ensuring that in the primary schools the instruction shall be given to the children of such Polish nationals through the medium of their own language. This provision shall not prevent the Polish Government from making the teaching of the Polish language obligatory in the said schools.

In towns and districts where there is a considerable proportion of Polish nationals belonging to racial, religious or linguistic minorities, these minorities shall be assured an equitable share in the enjoyment and application of the sums which may be provided out of public funds under the State, municipal or other budget, for educational, religious or charitable purposes.

The provisions of this Article shall apply to Polish citizens of German speech only in that part of Poland which was German territory on August 1, 1914.

ARTICLE 12

Poland agrees that the stipulations in the foregoing Articles, so far as they affect persons belonging to racial, religious or linguistic minorities, constitute obligations of international concern and shall be placed under the guarantee of the League of Nations. They shall not be modified without the assent of a majority of the Council of the League of Nations. The United States, the British Empire, France, Italy and Japan hereby agree not to withhold their assent from any modification in these

Articles which is in due form assented to by a majority of the Council of the League of Nations.

Poland agrees that any Member of the Council of the League of Nations shall have the right to bring to the attention of the Council any infraction, or any danger of infraction, of any of these obligations, and that the Council may thereupon take such action and give such direction as it may deem proper and effective in the circumstances.

Poland further agrees that any difference of opinion as to questions of law or fact arising out of these Articles between the Polish Government and any one of the Principal Allied and Associated Powers or any other Power, a Member of the Council of the League of Nations, shall be held to be a dispute of an international character under Article 14 of the Covenant of the League of Nations. The Polish Government thereby consents that any such dispute shall, if the other party thereto demands, be referred to the Permanent Court of International Justice. The decision of the Permanent Court shall be final and shall have the same force and effect as an award under Article 13 of the Covenant.

FRANCO-POLISH AGREEMENT

(1) POLITICAL AGREEMENT BETWEEN FRANCE AND POLAND, SIGNED AT PARIS ON
THE 19th FEBRUARY, 1921 ³

The Polish Government and the French Government, both desirous of safeguarding, by the maintenance of the Treaties which both have signed or which may in future be recognized by both Parties, the peace of Europe, the security of their territories and their common political and economic interests, have agreed as follows:

(1) In order to co-ordinate their endeavours towards peace, the two Governments undertake to consult each other on all questions of foreign policy which concern both States, so far as those questions affect the settlement of international relations in the spirit of the Treaties and in accordance with the Covenant of the League of Nations.

(2) In view of the fact that economic restoration is the essential preliminary condition of the re-establishment of international order and peace in Europe, the two Governments shall come to an understanding in this regard, with a view to concerted action and mutual support.

They will endeavour to develop their economic relations, and for this purpose will conclude special agreements and a Commercial Treaty.

3. Survey (1920-1923), 503-504.

(3) If, notwithstanding the sincerely peaceful views and intentions of the two Contracting States, either or both of them should be attacked without giving provocation, the two Governments shall take concerted measures for the defence of their territory and the protections of their legitimate interests, within the limits specified in the preamble.

(4) The two Governments undertake to consult each other before concluding new agreements which will affect their policy in Central and Eastern Europe.

(5) The present Agreement shall not come into force until the commercial agreements now in course of negotiations have been signed.

PACT OF NON-AGGRESSION BETWEEN POLAND AND THE UNION OF SOVIET SOCIALIST
REPUBLICS. SIGNED AT MOSCOW, JULY 25, 1932⁴

The President of the Polish Republic, of the one part, and the
Central Executive Committee of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics,
of the other part,

Desirous of maintaining the present state of peace between their
countries, and convinced that the maintenance of peace between them con-
stitutes an important factor in the work of preserving universal peace;

Considering that the Treaty of Peace of March 18, 1921, constitutes,
now as in the past, the basis of their reciprocal relations and undertakings;

Convinced that the peaceful settlement of international disputes and
the exclusion of all that might be contrary to the normal condition of
relations between States are the surest means of arriving at the goal de-
sired;

Declaring that none of the obligations hitherto assumed by either of
the Parties stands in the way of the peaceful development of their mutual
relations or is incompatible with the present Pact;

Have decided to conclude the present Pact with the object of amplifying
and completing the Pact for the renunciation of war signed at Paris on
August 27, 1928, and put into force by the Protocol signed at Moscow on

4. The Polish White Book, Doc. No. 151, 170-172.

February 9, 1929, and for that purpose have designated as their Plenipotentiaries . . .

Who, after exchanging their full powers, found in good and due form, have agreed on the following provisions:

ARTICLE 1

The two Contracting Parties, recording the fact that they have renounced war as an instrument of national policy in their mutual relations, reciprocally undertake to refrain from taking any aggressive action against or invading the territory of the other Party, either alone or in conjunction with other Powers.

Any act of violence attacking the integrity and inviolability of the territory or the political independence of the other Contracting Party shall be regarded as contrary to the undertakings contained in the present Article, even if such acts are committed without declaration of war and avoid all possible warlike manifestations.

ARTICLE 2

SHOULD one of the Contracting Parties be attacked by a third State or by a group of other States, the other Contracting Party undertakes not to give aid or assistance, either directly or indirectly, to the aggressor State during the whole of the conflict.

If one of the Contracting Parties commits an act of aggression against a third State the other Contracting Party shall have the right to be

released from the present Treaty without previous denunciation.

ARTICLE 3

EACH of the contracting Parties undertakes not to be a party to any agreement openly hostile to the other Party from the point of view of aggression.

ARTICLE 4

The undertakings provided for in Articles 1 and 2 of the present Pact shall in no case limit or modify their international rights and obligations of each Contracting Party under agreements concluded by it before the coming into force of the present Pact, so far as the said agreements contain no aggressive elements.

ARTICLE 5

THE Two Contracting Parties, desirous of settling and solving, exclusively by peaceful means, any disputes and differences, of whatever nature or origin, which may arise between them, undertake to submit questions at issue, which it has not been possible to settle within a reasonable period by diplomatic channels, to a procedure of conciliation, in accordance with the provisions of the Convention for the application of the procedure of conciliation, which constitutes an integral part of the present Pact and shall be signed separately and ratified as soon as possible simultaneously with the Pact of Non-Aggression.

ARTICLE 6

The present Pact shall be ratified as soon as possible, and the instruments of ratification shall be exchanged at Warsaw within thirty days following the ratification by Poland and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, after which the Pact shall come into force immediately.

ARTICLE 7

The Pact is concluded for three years. If it is not denounced by one of the Contracting Parties, after previous notice of not less than six months before the expiry of that period, it shall be automatically renewed for a further period of two years.

ARTICLE 8

The present Pact is drawn up in Polish and Russian, both texts being authentic.

In faith whereof the above-named Plenipotentiaries have signed the present Pact and have thereto affixed their seals.

Done at Moscow, in two copies, July 25, 1932.

PROTOCOL OF SIGNATURE NO. 1

THE Contracting Parties declare that Article 7 of the Pact of July 25, 1932, cannot be interpreted as meaning that the expiry of the time-limit or denunciation before the expiry of the time-limit under Article 7

could have as a result the limitation or cancellation of the obligations arising out of the Pact of Paris of 1928.

Done at Moscow, in two copies, July 25, 1932.

PROTOCOL OF SIGNATURE No. 2

On signing the Pact of Non-Aggression this day, the two Parties, having exchanged their views on the draft Conciliation Convention submitted by the Soviet Party, declare that they are convinced that there is no essential difference of opinion between them.

Done at Moscow, in two copies, July 25, 1932.

TEXT OF POLISH-GERMAN DECLARATION, JANUARY 26, 1934⁵

The German Government and the Polish Government consider that the time has come to introduce a new phase in the political relations between Germany and Poland by direct understanding between the two States. They have, therefore, decided in the present declaration to lay the foundation for the future development of these relations.

The two Governments base their action on the fact that the maintenance and safeguarding of a lasting peace between their countries is an essential pre-condition for the general peace of Europe. They have therefore decided to base their mutual relations on the principles laid down in the Pact of Paris of August 27, 1928, and propose to define more exactly the application of these principles in so far as the relations between Germany and Poland are concerned.

Each of the two Government, therefore, establish that the international obligations already respectively undertaken by them towards a third party do not hinder the peaceful development of their mutual relations, do not conflict with the present Declaration and are not affected by this Declaration. They establish, moreover, that this Declaration does not extend to those questions which under International Law are to be regarded exclusively as the internal concern of one of the two States.

5. The German White Book, Doc. No. 37, 55-56.

Both Governments announce their intention to settle directly all questions whatever which concern their mutual relations. Should any disputes arise between them and agreement thereon not be reached by direct negotiations, they will in each particular case, on the basis of mutual agreement, seek a solution by other peaceful means, without prejudice to the possibility of applying, if necessary, those methods of procedure which in the event of such cases arising are provided for in other agreements in force between them. Under no circumstances, however, will they resort to force in the settlement of such disputes.

The guarantee of peace created by these principles will facilitate the great task of both Governments of finding solutions for problems of a political, economic or cultural nature based on equitable and fair adjustment of the interests of both parties.

Both Governments are convinced in this way that the relations between their countries will enjoy a prosperous development, and will lead to a neighborly spirit which will prove a blessing not only to their own countries, but also to the other peoples of Europe.

The present Declaration shall be ratified, and the instruments of ratification shall be exchanged in Warsaw as soon as possible. The Declaration is valid for a period of ten years, reckoned from the day of the exchange of the instruments of ratification. If the declaration is not denounced by one of the two Governments six months before the expiration of this period it will continue in force, but can then be denounced by

either Government at any time on notice of six months being given.

Done in two original documents in the German and Polish languages respectively.

Berlin, January 26, 1934.

For the German Government

C. Freiherr von Neurath

For the Polish Government

Josef Lipski

PROTOCOL RENEWING UNTIL DECEMBER 31, 1945, THE PACT OF NON-AGGRESSION OF
JULY 25, 1932, BETWEEN POLAND AND THE UNION OF SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLICS⁶

Moscow, May 5, 1934

The President of the Republic of Poland, and The Central Executive
Committee of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics,

Being desirous of providing as firm a basis as possible for the
development of relations between their countries;

Being desirous of giving each other fresh proof of the unchangeable
character and solidity of the pacific and friendly relations happily
established between them;

Moved by the desire to collaborate in the consolidation of world
peace and also for the stability and peaceful development of international
relations in Eastern Europe;

Noting that the conclusion on July 5, 1932, at Moscow, of the Treaty
between the Republic of Poland and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
has had a beneficial influence on the development of their relations and
on the solution of the above-mentioned problems;

Have decided to sign the present Protocol, and have for this purpose
appointed as their Plenipotentiaries . . .

6. The Polish White Book, Doc. No. 157, 179-180.

Who, having communicated their full powers, found in good and true form, have agreed on the following provisions:

ARTICLE 1

In modification of the provisions of Article 7 of the Treaty of Non-Aggression concluded at Moscow on July 25, 1932, between the Republic of Poland and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics concerning the date and manner in which that Treaty shall cease to have effect, the two Contracting Parties decide that it shall remain in force until December 31, 1945.

Each of the High Contracting Parties shall be entitled to denounce the Treaty by giving notice to that effect six months before the expiry of the above-mentioned period. If the Treaty is not denounced by either of the Contracting Parties, its period of validity shall be automatically prolonged for two years; similarly, the Treaty shall be regarded as prolonged on each occasion for a further period of two years, if it is not denounced by either of the Contracting Parties in the manner provided for in the present Article.

ARTICLE 2

The present Protocol is drawn up in duplicate, each copy being in the Polish and Russian languages and both texts being equally authentic.

The present Protocol shall be ratified as soon as possible, and the instruments of ratification shall be exchanged between the Contracting

Parties at Warsaw.

The present Protocol shall come into force on the date of the exchange of the instruments of ratification.

In faith whereof the above-mentioned Plenipotentiaries have signed the present Protocol and have thereto affixed their seals.

Done at Moscow in duplicate, in the Polish and Russian languages, the 5th day of May, 1934.

FINAL PROTOCOL

In connection with the signature on this date of the Protocol prolonging the Treaty of Non-Aggression between the Republic of Poland and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics of July 25, 1932, each of the High Contracting Parties, having again examined all the provisions of the Peace Treaty concluded at Riga on March 18, 1921, which constitutes the basis of their mutual relations, declares that it has no obligations and is not bound by any declarations inconsistent with the provisions of the said Peace Treaty and in particular of Article 3 thereof.

Consequently, the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics confirms that the note from the People's Commissar, G. V. Chicherin, of September 28, 1926, to the Lithuanian Government cannot be interpreted to mean that the note implied any intention on the part of the Soviet Government to interfere in the settlement of the territorial questions mentioned therein.

Done at Moscow in duplicate, in the Polish and Russian languages, the 5th day of May, 1934.

NO. 49 MEMORANDUM OF AN OFFICIAL IN THE POLITICAL DEPARTMENT OF THE
FOREIGN OFFICE⁷

(Translation)

Berlin, September 13, 1934

Consul Krauel has just telephoned from Geneva as follows:

Beck has just made a speech in the League Assembly which was devoted almost entirely to the minorities question and in which he declared that Poland must insist upon a generalization of the obligations with regard to minorities; he had, however, heard that several states would adopt an oppositional attitude. He was therefore, compelled to state that Poland would, in the future, refuse all co-operation which would assist international bodies in supervising her execution of the provisions for the protection of minorities.

Poland's announcement that she would cease to co-operate in the supervision by the League of Nations of the protection of minorities was met with formal objections on the part of the representatives of Great Britain and France in the League Assembly. On this occasion, Sir John Simon, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and head of the British Delegation, made the following declaration at the plenary meeting of the fifteenth League of Nations Assembly on September 14, 1934 -

7. The German White Book, Doc. No. 49, 65.

"The country which I and the United Kingdom delegation represent, together with some other Powers, is a party to the Polish Minorities Treaty. Poland accepted certain treaty obligations with regard to minorities which included the guarantee of the League of Nations. I would add, in this connection, that the terms of Article 93 of the Treaty of Versailles, coming as it does in that part of the Treaty dealing with the establishment of the boundaries of Poland, can not be overlooked. Poland has further accepted a certain procedure which is laid down in certain Council resolutions as to the manner in which this guarantee should be exercised - a procedure which clearly implies the co-operation of Poland".

Mr. Barthou, French Minister for Foreign Affairs and Head of the French Delegation, made the following emphatic statement at the same meeting of the League of Nations Assembly:-

"The Polish Minister for Foreign Affairs yesterday raised a question concerning the future application of the Minorities Treaty concluded between Poland and the principal Allied Powers on June 28, 1919. Since this discussion has been opened, it is only natural that the other signatories to that Treaty should define their attitude. The representative of the United Kingdom has just done so in no uncertain terms. France, which was also a signatory of the Treaty of June 28, 1919, held the presidency of the Peace Conference during which it was concluded; I therefore consider myself bound in loyalty to associate myself entirely with Sir John Simon's conclusions".

ARBITRAL AWARD⁸

Vienna, November 2, 1938

Pol. IV 795⁸

In virtue of a request from the Royal Hungarian Government and the Czechoslovak Government to the German and Royal Italian Governments to settle by award the questions pending between them relating to territories to be ceded to Hungary, as well as in virtue of notes thereupon exchanged on October 30, 1938, between the Governments concerned, the German Foreign Minister, Herr Joachim von Ribbentrop, and the Foreign Minister of His Majesty the King of Italy, Emperor of Ethiopia, Count Galeazzo Ciano, have met this day in Vienna and, after further discussion with the Royal Hungarian Foreign Minister, Dr. Frantisek Chvalkovsky, have promulgated the following award:

1. The areas to be ceded to Hungary by Czechoslovakia are marked on the annexed map. Demarcation of the frontier on the spot is delegated to a Hungarian-Czechoslovak Commission.

2. The evacuation by Czechoslovakia of the areas to be ceded and their occupation, as well as other procedure connected therewith, are to be settled at once by a Hungarian-Czechoslovak Commission.

8. Documents on German Foreign Policy, IV, 125-127.

3. The Czechoslovak Government will insure that the territories to be ceded are left in an orderly condition at the time of evacuation.

4. Special questions arising out of the cession of territory, in particular questions relating to nationality and option, are to be regulated by a Hungarian-Czechoslovak Commission.

5. Likewise, special measures for the protection of persons of the Magyar nationality remaining in Czechoslovak territory and of persons not of the Magyar race in the ceded territories are to be agreed upon by a Hungarian-Czechoslovak Commission. This commission will take special care that the Magyar ethnic group [Volksgruppe] in Pressburg will be accorded the same status as other ethnic groups there.

6. Insofar as disadvantages and difficulties in the sphere of economics or [railway] traffic may be caused by a cession of territory to Hungary for the area remaining to Czechoslovakia, the Hungarian Government will, in agreement with the Czechoslovak Government, do its utmost to remove these disadvantages and difficulties.

7. In the event of difficulties or doubts arising from the implementation of this award, the Royal Hungarian and Czechoslovak Governments will settle the matter directly between themselves. Should they, however, fail to reach agreement on any question, this question will then be submitted to the German and Italian Governments for final decision.

Joachim von Ribbentrop

Galeazzo Ciano.

The general course of the new frontier between the Kingdom of Hungary and the Republic of Czechoslovakia as determined in the award made by the German Foreign Minister and the Royal Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs on November 2, 1938, is as follows:

Starting from the old frontier south of Pressburg, the new frontier runs north of the Pressburg-Neuhäusl railway line, turns in a north-easterly direction to the northwest of Neuhäusl, and is continued north of Vrable direct to the Lewenz-Altsökl railway line. The towns of Neuhäusl and Lewenz revert to Hungary. To the east of Lewenz the frontier runs diagonally through the Epel territory some 30 kilometers north of the old frontier. Its further course is directly to the north of the towns of Lutschenetz and Gross-Steffelsdorf, which also revert to Hungary. The frontier then turns north, includes Kaschau in Hungarian territory, and follows a south-easterly course to a point some 30 kilometers north of the railway junction of Satoraljaujkely on the former Hungarian frontier. It then proceeds due east, to a point directly north of Unguar, which is assigned to Hungary. The frontier then takes a sharp turn to the southeast. Its further course passes close to the north of Munkatsch. Continuing in a south-easterly direction, the new frontier links up with the old frontier northeast of the Rumanian frontier railway station of Halmei.

Of the disputed towns, therefore, Pressburg itself, the capital of Slovakia, the old cathedral town of Neutra, and the town of Sevljusch in the Carpatho-Ukraine, with its surrounding villages, remain within the Czechoslovak Republic. The towns of Neuhäusal, Lewenz, Lutschenetz, Kaschau,

Uzhorod, and Munkatsch were adjudged to the Kingdom of Hungary.

The new ruling returns the whole area of compact Hungarian settlement to the Kingdom of Hungary. At points where circumstances did not allow an exact determination of the frontier on ethnic lines [völkmassige Grenziehung], the interests of both sides were carefully weighed.

IDENTIC DECLARATION BY THE POLISH AND GERMAN GOVERNMENTS ON THE SUBJECT
OF THE TREATMENT OF MINORITIES⁹

November 5, 1937.

In a friendly exchange of views, the German and Polish Governments have had an opportunity of discussing the position of the German Minority in Poland and the Polish Minority in Germany. They are in complete agreement that the treatment of these minorities is a matter of great importance for the further development of friendly neighbourly relations between Germany and Poland, and that in both countries the well-being of the minority is better protected when it is certain that the same principles will be observed in the other country. For this reason the two Governments declare with satisfaction that their two States, each within the limits of its own sovereignty, regard as essential the following guiding principles:

(1) Mutual respect for German and Polish nationality naturally should exclude any attempt to assimilate the minority by force, to question the character of the minority, or to hinder the individual's right to claim membership in a minority. In particular, neither Government will put any pressure on young members of the minority to estrange them from the ethnic group to which they belong.

(2) Members of the minority have a right to the free use of their

9. The Polish White Book, Doc. No. 32, 40-41.

mother tongue in speech and writing, in their personal and economic relations, in the Press, and in public meetings. The use of their mother tongue and national customs, either in private or public life, shall not entail any disadvantages for them.

(3) The right of members of the minority to unite in associations of a cultural or economic nature is guaranteed.

(4) The minority may establish and maintain schools employing its own language. In the religious sphere members of the minority are granted the right to use their mother tongue in their church organizations and in the practice of their religion. There will be no interference by the authorities with existing institutions in the sphere of confession or of charitable activity.

(5) The members of a minority may not, solely on account of such membership, suffer any obstruction or disadvantage in the choice or in the exercise of their profession or commercial activity. In the economic sphere members of a minority shall enjoy the same rights as the nationals of the State, especially in the possession or acquisition of property.

The above principles can in no way affect the duty of the minorities to give complete loyalty to the State to which they belong. They have been inspired by a desire to guarantee to minorities just conditions of life and a harmonious collaboration with the nationals of the State in which they live - a state of affairs which will contribute to the progressive strengthening of the friendly and good-neighbourly relations between Poland and Germany.

PROPOSAL OF THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT FOR A JOINT FOUR-POWER DECLARATION,

21 MARCH 1939¹⁰

(a) Memorandum delivered to the Polish Foreign Ministry by the British Ambassador in Warsaw (Sir Howard Kennard), 21 March 1939.

1. Recent German absorption of Czechoslovakia shows clearly that the German Government are resolved to go beyond their hitherto avowed aim to consolidate the German race. They have now extended their conquest to another nation, and if this should prove subsequently part of a definite policy of domination, there is no State in Europe which is not directly or ultimately threatened.

2. In the circumstances thus created, it seems to His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom to be desirable to proceed without delay to the organization of mutual support on the part of all those who realize the necessity of protecting international society from further violation of the fundamental laws on which it rests.

3. As a first step they propose that the French, Soviet and Polish Governments should join with His Majesty's Government in signing and publishing a formal declaration, the terms of which they suggest should be on the lines of the following:

10. Documents (1939-1946), I, 113-114.

We, the undersigned, duly authorized to that effect, hereby declare that inasmuch as peace and security in Europe are matters of common interest and concern, and since European peace and security may be affected by any action which constitutes a threat to the political independence of any European State, our respective Governments hereby undertake immediately to consult together as to what steps should be taken to offer joint resistance to any such action.

4. It appears to His Majesty's Government that such a declaration would in itself be a valuable contribution to the stability of Europe, and they would propose that the publication should be followed by an examination by the signatories of any specific situation which requires it, with a view to determining the nature of any action which might be taken.

5. His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom would be prepared to sign the declaration immediately the three other Governments indicated their readiness to do so.

6. They would propose to say nothing of this to other Governments concerned before the four Powers are agreed on the declaration.

BECK'S INSTRUCTION TO THE POLISH AMBASSADOR IN LONDON (COUNT RACZYNSKI),

23 March 1939¹¹

With reference to the British proposal of March 21, I request you to inquire of Lord Halifax whether, in view of:

1. the unavoidable difficulties and complications, and consequent waste of time, involved in multilateral negotiations,
2. on the other hand the very rapid pace of events, which from one day to the next might create the necessity for friendly understanding to co-ordinate views and actions, the British Government would not be prepared to consider the possibility of concluding with us immediately a bilateral agreement in the spirit of the proposed declaration.

In my understanding, such an agreement would not prejudice the fate of further negotiations; nevertheless it would at once give us a basis for useful co-operation in various fields which to-day present certain dangers.

I have mentioned the idea of such an agreement to the British Ambassador here, adding that we have an alliance with France dating from 1921, and the British, for their part, also have their understandings with the French, so that in the event of our two Governments reaching an agreement, we would not be acting in contradiction either to Polish or to British policy in relation to France. I also assume that the French

11. ^{The} Polish White Book, Doc. No. 66, 70-71.

Government would be confidently informed of our eventual decisions. The form and scope of such an arrangement or possibly "Gentlemen's Agreement" could be quickly defined, if the British Government regarded the principle itself as possible of acceptance.

ANGLO-POLISH AGREEMENT OF MUTUAL ASSISTANCE¹²

London, August 25, 1939.

The Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Polish Government,

Desiring to place on a permanent basis the collaboration between their respective countries resulting from the assurances of mutual assistance of a defensive character which they already exchanged;

Have resolved to conclude an Agreement for that purpose and have appointed as their Plenipotentiaries:

The Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland:

The Rt. Hon. Viscount Halifax, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E., Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs;

The Polish Government:

His Excellency Count Edward Raczyński, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Polish Republic in London;

Who, having exchanged their Full Powers, found in good and due form, have agreed on the following provisions:

ARTICLE 1

SHOULD one of the Contracting Parties become engaged in hostilities

12. The Polish White Book, Doc. No. 91, 100-102.

with a European Power in consequence of aggression by the latter against that Contracting Party, the other Contracting Party will at once give the Contracting Party engaged in hostilities all the support and assistance in its power.

ARTICLE 2

(1) The provisions of Article 1 will also apply in the event of any action by a European Power which clearly threatened, directly or indirectly, the independence of one of the Contracting Parties, and was of such a nature that the Party in question considered it vital to resist with its armed forces.

(2) Should one of the Contracting Parties become engaged in hostilities with a European Power in consequence of action by that European State in such a way as to constitute a clear menace to the security of that Contracting Party, the provisions of Article 1 will apply, without prejudice, however, to the rights of the other European State concerned.

ARTICLE 3

Should a European Power attempt to undermine the independence of one of the Contracting Parties by processes of economic penetration or in any other way, the Contracting Parties will support each other in resistance to such attempts. Should the European Power concerned thereupon embark on hostilities against one of the Contracting Parties, the provisions of Article 1 will apply.

ARTICLE 4

The method of applying the undertakings of mutual assistance provided for by the present Agreement are established between the competent naval, military and air authorities of the Contracting parties.

ARTICLE 5

Without prejudice to the foregoing undertakings of the Contracting Parties to give each other mutual support and assistance immediately on the outbreak of hostilities, they will exchange complete and speedy information concerning any development which might threaten their independence and, in particular, concerning any development which threatened to call the said undertakings into operation.

ARTICLE 6

(1) The Contracting parties will communicate to each other the terms of any undertakings of assistance against aggression which they have already given or may in future give to other States.

(2) Should either of the Contracting Parties intend to give such an undertaking after the coming into force of the present Agreement, the other Contracting Party shall, in order to ensure the proper functioning of the Agreement, be informed thereof.

(3) Any new undertaking which the Contracting Parties may enter into in future shall neither limit their obligations under the present Agreement

nor indirectly create new obligations between the Contracting Party not participating in these undertakings and the third State concerned.

ARTICLE 7

Should the Contracting Parties be engaged in hostilities in consequence of the application of the present Agreement, they will not conclude an armistice or treaty of peace except by mutual agreement.

ARTICLE 8

(1) The present Agreement shall remain in force for a period of five years.

(2) Unless denounced six months before the expiry of this period it shall continue in force, each Contracting Party having thereafter the right to denounce it at any time by giving six months' notice to that effect.

(3) The present Agreement shall come into force on signature.

In faith whereof the above-named Plenipotentiaries have signed the present Agreement, and have affixed thereto their seals.

Done in English in duplicate, at London, the 25th August, 1939. A Polish text shall subsequently be agreed upon between the Contracting Parties and both texts will then be authentic.

(L.S.) Halifax

(L.S.) Edward Racyński

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